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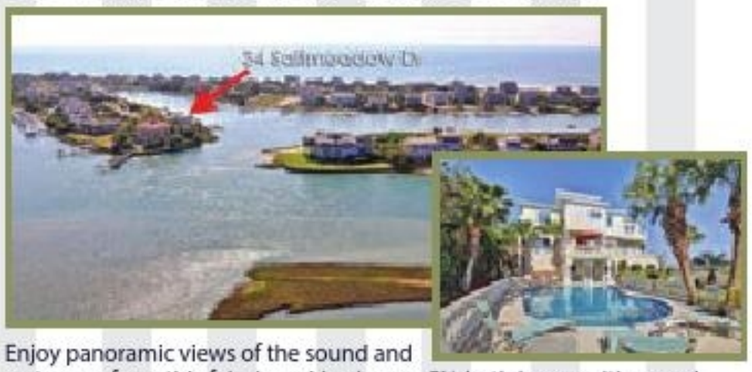

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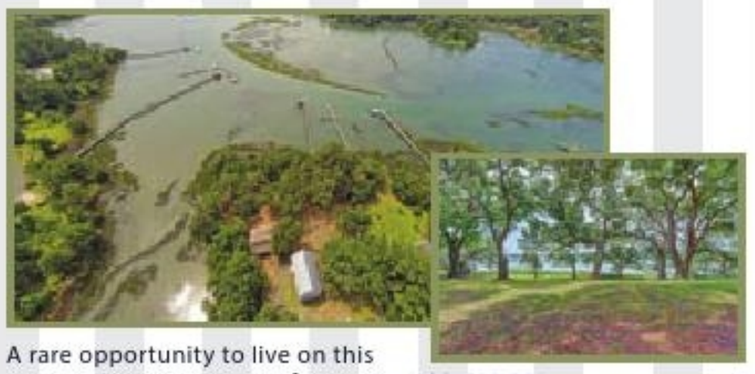

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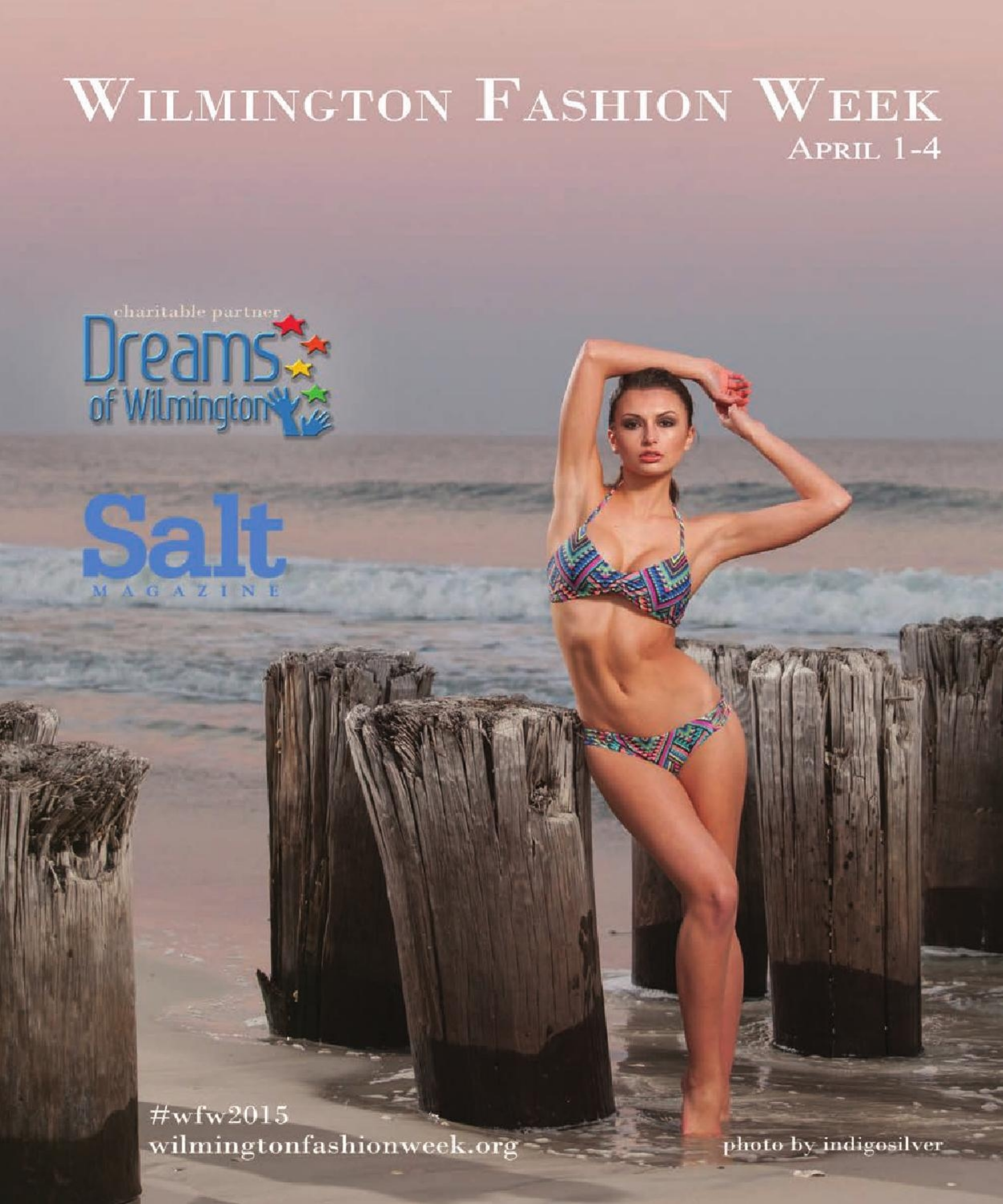

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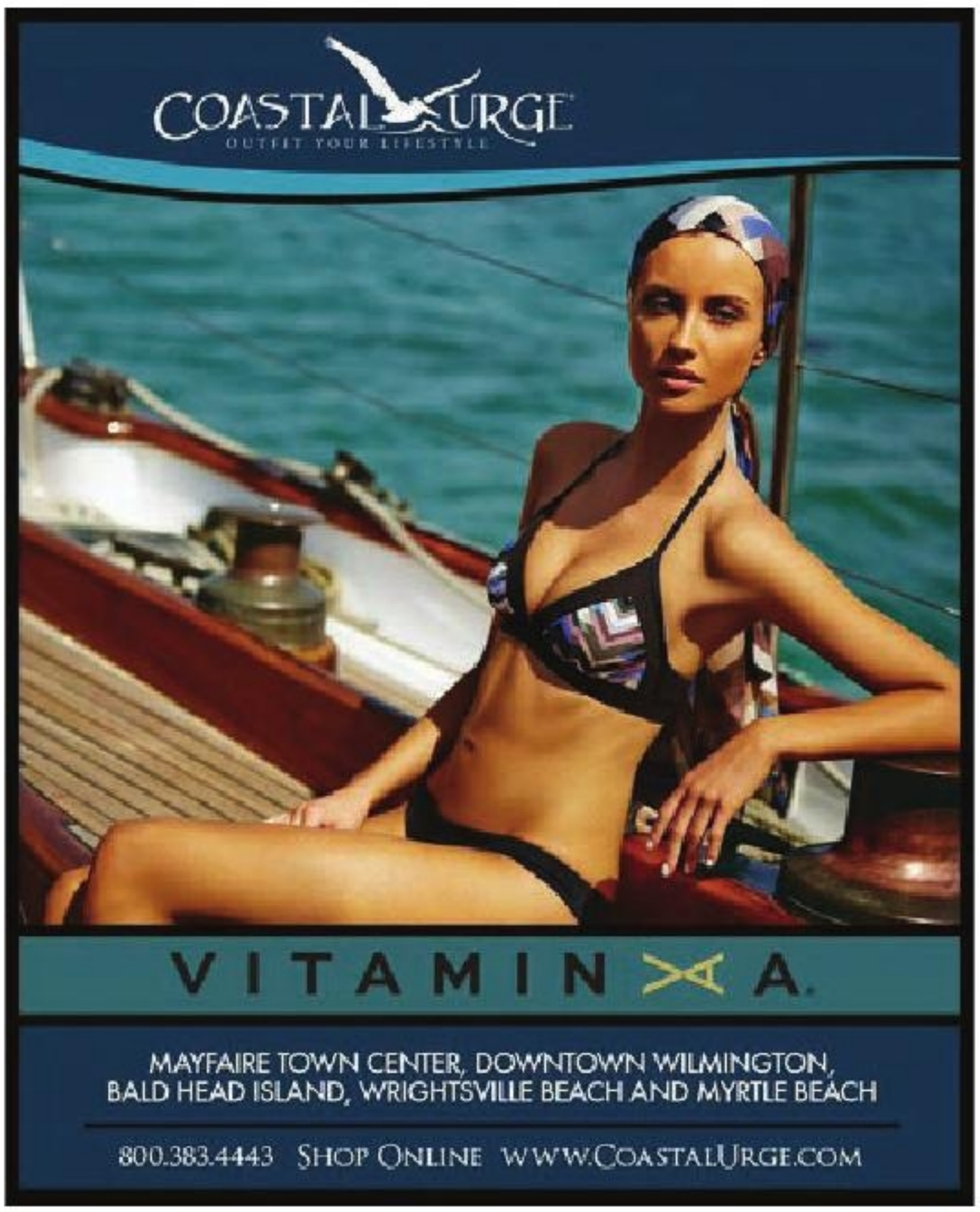
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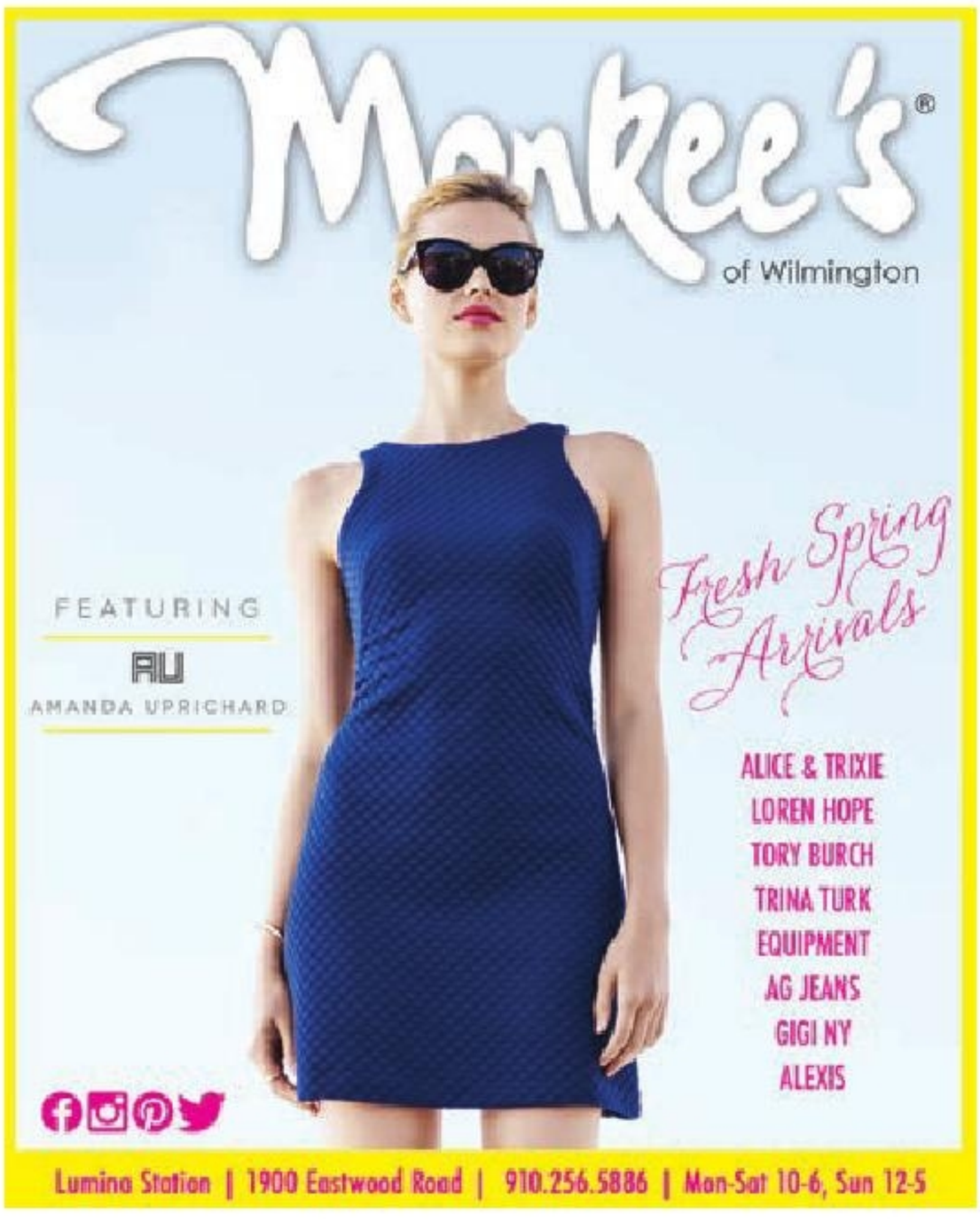

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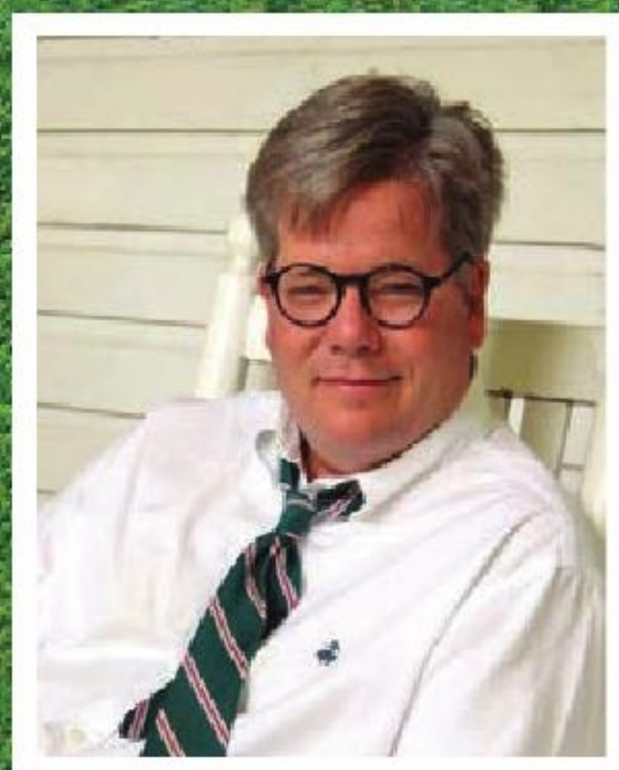

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# Stuff Happens

By Jim Dodson

**My wife,** who feels about clutter more or less the way your average *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit model feels about an unexpected blizzard in July, recently joked that we should consider moving again in order to get rid of more "stuff."

Except I'm pretty sure she wasn't joking.

Over the past decade, we've moved our household twice, and it's amazing the stuff we managed to unload — unused furniture and clothes, old children's toys, rugs, extra work tools, lawn furniture, out-of-date appliances, mismatched china and kitchenware, disabled lamps, horrible artwork, and a blue million — OK, at least several hundred — of my books and other stuff nobody in their right mind would ever want, but weirdly did, at the two yard sales the aforementioned anti-clutter activist conducted in our driveway in my enthusiastic absence.

Somewhere I read that moving three times is the equivalent of having your house burn to the ground. If that's the case, we should be living out of doors under the stars by now given all the stuff that's disappeared from our lives.

With the arrival of yet another March — the traditional start of baseball spring training to some sporting minds, spring cleaning season to Others Who Shall Not Be Named — I can see that familiar glint in her eye as she steely appraises the den where we innocently sit watching an episode of *Outlander*, taking a mental inventory of things that must soon go. With our nest officially empty and the urge to downsize and simplify taking an even stronger grip of her uncluttered mind, everything in our lives is suddenly up for review or is already being reduced before my eyes. This includes, but is not limited to, daily caloric intake, unworn articles of clothing, any household item that has not been used within the past nine months, and possibly even husbands.

Call me crazy, but sometimes I secretly fear my very person could be next, deemed unessential and taken out one morning with the big green recycle bin and left to be picked up at the curb.

Not long ago, after all, I heard a middle-aged female author on the radio talking with unfettered delight about how after "two marriages and one family and several houses full of incredible amounts of stuff," she found herself a spare and cozy apartment in an upscale part of town, and decorated it with minimalist brio — "everything was simple and white, without a single piece of clutter." When a group of her middle-aged friends dropped in to see the new place, and I quote, "They had a completely visceral reaction to it, an epiphany of sorts, an overwhelming urge to do the same in their lives — to liberate themselves from all the stuff in their lives! The problem, of course, is husbands and children. They collect stuff like human magnets. What a woman really wants is *no clutter!* At our age," she added triumphantly, "it's far better than sex!"

On a similar distressing note, a colleague relates that a close friend of hers cleverly encouraged her outdoorsy husband to expand his domain to the man shed out back — then slowly began moving his personal "stuff" out there a little at a time until there was no trace of the poor fellow anywhere in his own house.

In effect, she quietly erased him. My colleague laughed chillingly as she told me this story, casually letting drop that her own husband's duck-hunting decoys, pipe racks, hunting magazines and other traditional material evidence of an average middle-aged male's existence is quietly on its way out to the back forty, presumably without the unlucky sod even noticing. Soon there will be no trace that he was ever there. Do I not have a moral obligation as a fellow member of the male species, the Brotherhood of Ordinary Stuff Gatherers, to try to warn him?

After all, stuff happens. On the other hand, when it comes to a determined wife with springtime decluttering on her mind, it may simply be each man for himself.

Thus before I and my few remaining personal belongings get the same bum's rush to the curb, this got me thinking about my own domestic situation, taking a hard look at the "stuff" that's accumulated over the years in my modest home office, my sacred inner sanctum where I keep all sorts of things that speak of my presence on this planet and mean the world to nobody but me and quite possibly my dog Mulligan.

One man's keepsakes, in other words, may simply be his wife's weekly Saturday morning run to the Habitat ReStore.

Mind you, I'm not *that* much of a collector of anything, per se, unless you care to count the fifty or so crest-bearing golf caps I've picked up from a forty-odd-year walk through the noble and ancient game; maybe several hundred remaining essential books ranging from ancient mythology to modern gardening that I simply couldn't bear to part with this side of a nuclear emergency; a rug admittedly only Mulligan the dog and I truly like; a comfortable if somewhat ratty reading chair rescued from a second-hand shop; a set of swell pirate bookends; several romantically themed reading lamps (a blue-coat soldier, another made from the shafts of vintage golf clubs, a third made of faux "classic" boyhood adventure books) nobody but a hacker of a certain seniority or a precocious 6-year-old boy weaned on R. Kipling could truly ever appreciate; various framed photographs of scorecards and old golf pals both living and departed; posters from my own long-forgotten book tours; a Hindu prayer goddess; a carved African fertility head; two large pincushion boards crammed with old tournament badges; beloved snapshots of my young children and my first car; scraps of favorite quotes and verse collected at random; old train tickets; theater stubs, etc.;

ILLUSTRATION BY KIRA SCHOENFELDER

three full sets of golf clubs I can't seem to let go; four rescued houseplants; and a large growler jug from a local brewery bearing the face of a Medieval Green Man where I'm secretly saving spare pocket change for a trip to Norway's fabled fjords some summer in the distant future.

In terms of personal "stuff," that's about all I've really got left — one small office oasis crammed to the gunwales with items that hold absolutely no value to the world at large, providing no offense to anyone except possibly someone who has delusional adult fantasies of a spotless white house.

To the untrained eye, these things may appear to be nothing more than disorderly collection of pointless male clutter, but I assure you there is purpose under heaven to all this surviving stuff.

Albert Einstein, the theoretical German physicist who inspired a generation of hair stylists and developed the Theory of Relativity, pointed out that if a cluttered desk is the sign of a busy mind at work, what then does a desk empty of anything say about its owner?

All things being relative, I aspire to follow this path, yet I fear a new and bolder front in the household war against my remaining stuff may be about to open along with the windows for an infusion of fresh spring air.

Item One: Last month's issue of *Real Simple* seems to be worryingly displayed everywhere I look these days, bearing the telltale headline "*De-Clutter Your Home and Life Now!*"– a working manifesto if I've ever heard one for the average middle-aged woman who harbors secret dreams of a spotless and husband-free pad of her own.

Item Two: In the interest of a serener inner self, Madame lights a tropical-scented candle and does deep yoga meditation every morning in the living room, which has been as thoroughly stripped of tchotchkes and as diligently scrubbed as a CIA safe house. Just the other morning as I shuffled past the open door, making for coffee in my old L.L. Bean robe, I could swear I overheard her calmly chanting: "Those goofy pirate bookends must go . . . the Green Man jug, too. Those goofy pirate bookends must go . . ."

Also, possibly on direct order from the uncluttered bosses at *Real Simple*, she took it upon herself at winter's end to clean out the storage unit where decades of my work papers, extra books and copies of almost every magazine I've written for in forty years is safely archived and collecting dust.

"It's time we do something with all of this — get it organized into at least something resembling contained chaos," she declared last Saturday morning (rather insensitively, I thought) from the doorway of my sacred inner sanctum, where I sat smoking one of my oldest pipes and musing on the face of my Hindu prayer goddess.

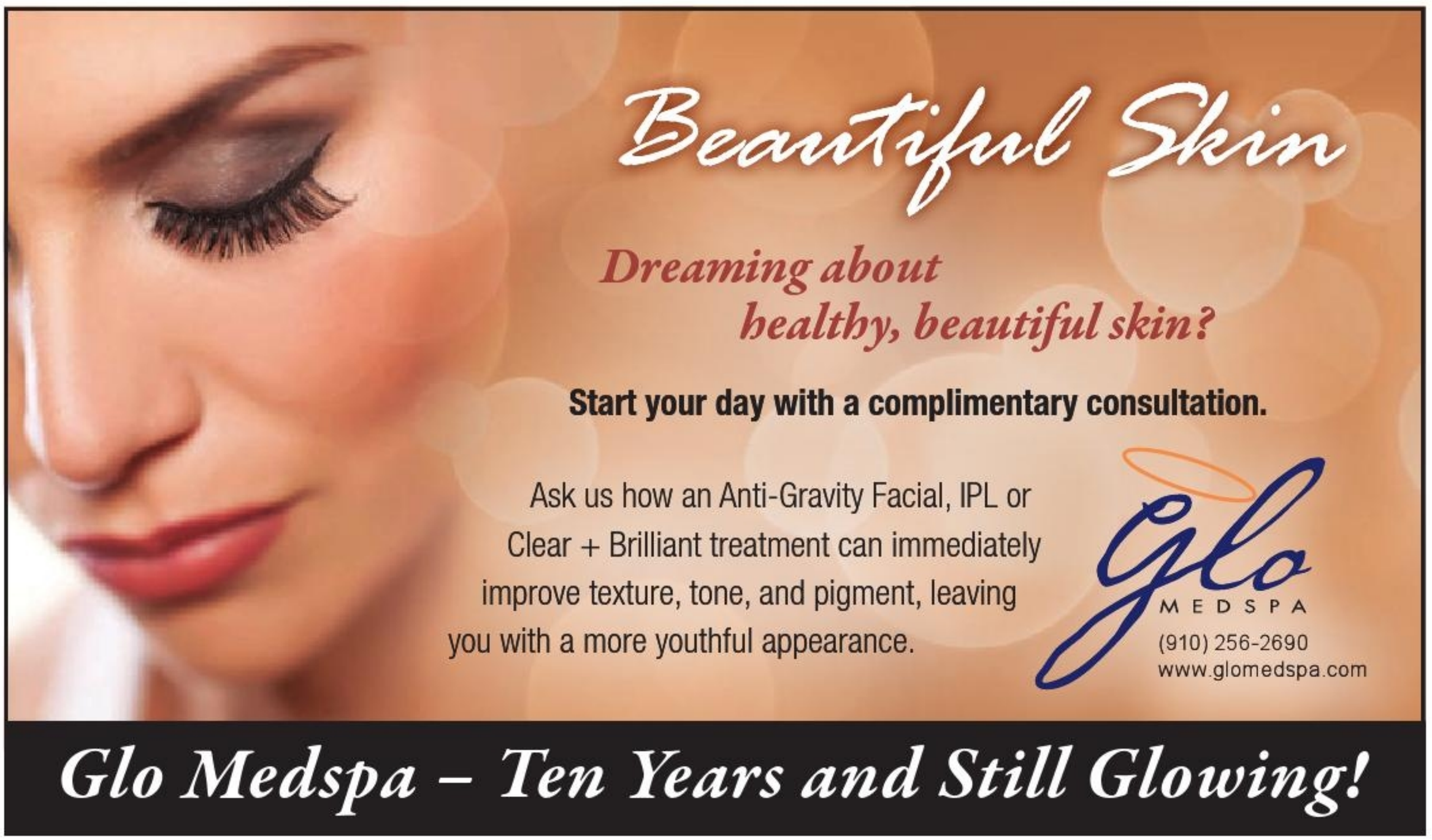
I count at least thirty boxes now stacked in the mud room outside my office door, the only objects remaining between my wife and a better life. Naturally she has a plan of attack. She is a woman who could teach orderly behavior to a convention of anarchists. She would enjoy that beyond measure, too.

"We'll save only those papers that are essential and shred everything else. Then we'll scan your magazine articles and get rid of all those unnecessary magazines. You probably don't need a third of those old books, either, by the way."

It doesn't take an Albert Einstein to see where this is headed. My inner sanctum lies directly in her path to a happier life, my stuff's days are as numbered as the graying hairs on my head. I haven't seen her this happy since Goodwill offered her a personalized donation parking spot.

Perhaps I shall simply take my beloved Green Man coin jug and quietly head off to the curb to await the recycling man, getting an early jump on my long-dreamed journey to a Norwegian fjord.

*Contact editor Jim Dodson (and Mulligan) at jim@saltmagazinenc.com.*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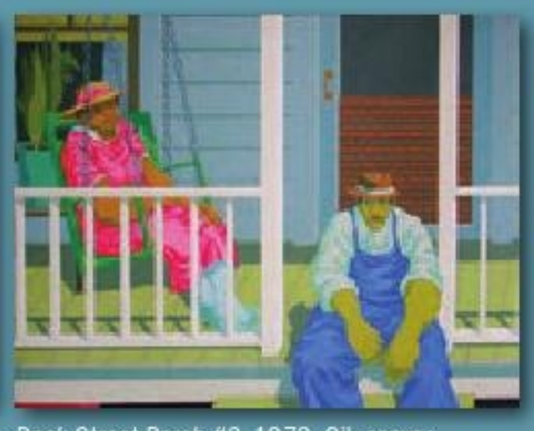
*Mending Nets: Northeaster*, 1979, Serigraph, paper



*Dock Street Porch #2*, 1973, Oil, canvas

*Beach Cottage*, 1981, Oil, canvas

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# SaltWorks

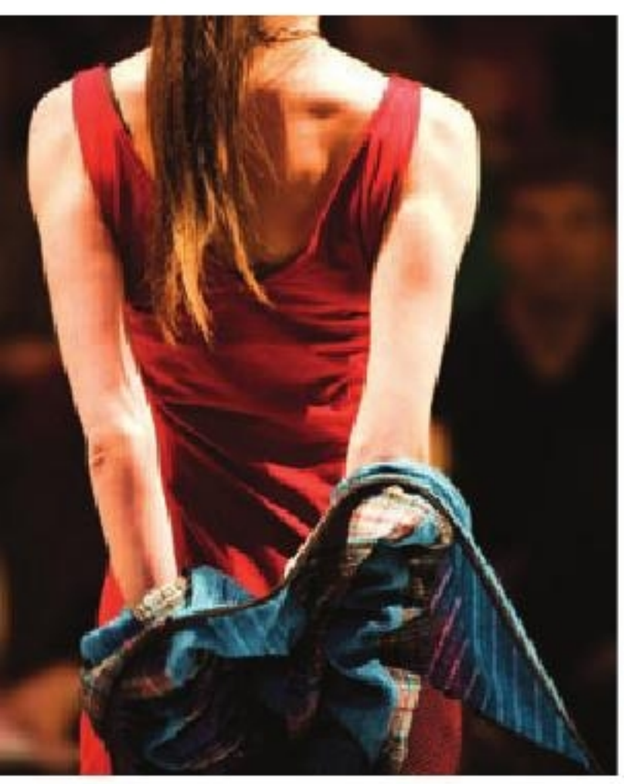
## Carnival of Delight

"The Hatter opened his eyes very wide . . . but all he said was, 'Why is a raven like a writing desk?'" Yes, the Cape Fear Literacy Council's thirtieth annual Literacy Gala will be slightly mad, but it's a party you won't want to miss. On Saturday, March 7, at 6:30 p.m., there's room enough at the table for you, your riddle-loving friends — perhaps even the March Hare — for a wonky but spectacular affair inspired by Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

High tea, fantasy-inspired tastings, Wonderland garden games, silent and vocal auctions, and song and dance beneath the just-full moon with eclectic musical powerhouse Blivet. Black tie; creative en-theme costumes also encouraged. Proceeds benefit the Cape Fear Literacy Council. Tickets: $125. Rabbit Hole is located at Audi Cape Fear. Don't be late. Info: (910) 251-0911 or www.cfliteracy.org.

## The Sixth Sense (Fashion)

Last month, *Salt* contributor Dana Sachs took style consultant T.J. Dunn out to lunch and learned, among other things, that owning your look is perhaps the secret to wearing, say, an Oxford-style button-down with a metallic elephant-print wraparound skirt. Get Dunn talking about Wilmington Fashion Week (April 1–4), however, and you'll discover that his greatest passion has less do to with haute couture as it does with giving others the opportunity to shine. Local models, aspiring designers, and the youth of DREAMS, to name a few. On Tuesday, March 31, WFW's Fashion Night Out will kick off the celebration that is Wilmington Fashion Week — runway shows, parties, you name it. Participating shops will extend their hours so you can find — and own — your look in time for the weekend festivities. Stay in the know: www.wilmingtonfashionweek.org; www.facebook.com/wilmingtonfashionweek. #WFW2015

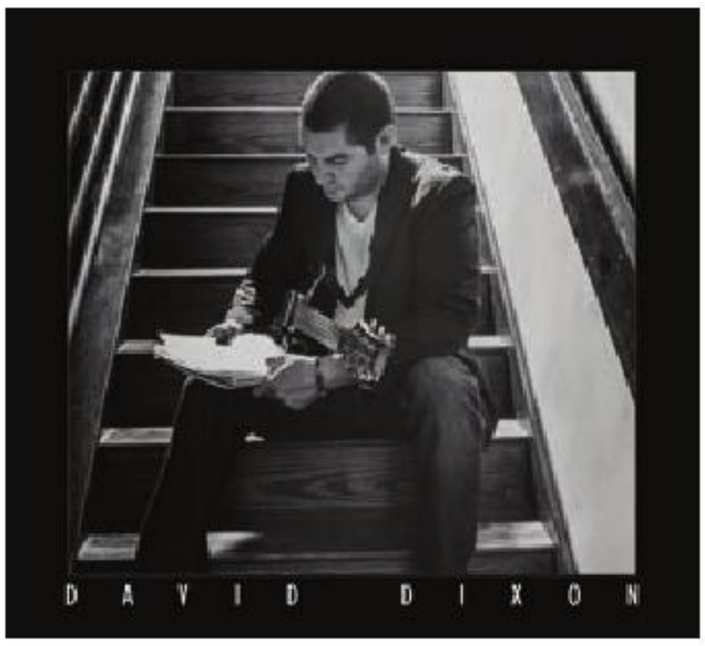


## A Fine Line

As novelist Orson Scott Card put it, "metaphors have a way of holding the most truth in the least space." In the case of *The Clothesline Muse*, a multi-media production coming to Kenan Auditorium on March 28, 8 p.m., the metaphor is a piece of twine — a symbol of the grind and grace of domestic drudgery. Exploring the role of the clothesline in African-American culture, says the composer, this empowering performance fuses dance, percussive music, spoken word, interview text, video and interactive art, transforming the lowly task of washing clothes by hand into a breathtaking tribute to honor our ancestors. Maya Freelon Asante's colorful tissue paper art hangs on the line like laundry drying in the sun; Kariamu Welsh's choreographed movements — motions of washing, wringing, pressing, folding — haunt and liberate; six-time Grammy-nominated jazz vocalist Nnenna Freelon is the Muse. Be inspired. Tickets: $20 (general public); $16 (faculty and staff); $8 (students and youth). Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts/clotheslinemuse.html.

## Fiddle-dee-dee

There's something undeniably powerful about the chemistry between musician-lovers. Think John and Yoko. Ike and Tina. Johnny and June Carter Cash. But in order to understand the magic between husband and wife fiddle duo Donnell Leahy and Natalie MacMaster, you simply must experience it in person. Donnell Leahy first heard Cape Breton fiddling sensation Natalie MacMaster on a cassette tape while touring in Germany with his eight-piece family band. "I decided I had to meet her," he said, and drove to Cape Breton the day after he returned from Germany to ask her to dinner. "I don't know what you look like," he told Natalie. "Maybe if you brought your fiddle, I'd know who you were." They went out for dinner, played some tunes, said Donnell, and the rest is history. Speaking of history, Donnell Leahy is, perhaps, the greatest fiddle player of our time. "I'm not the greatest with words, but on the fiddle, I can tell the whole story passionately," says Donnell. Be witness to their wizardly ways and passionate musical narratives on Wednesday, March 25, 7:30 p.m. Tickets: $20, $29, $36. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.




## Port City Sound

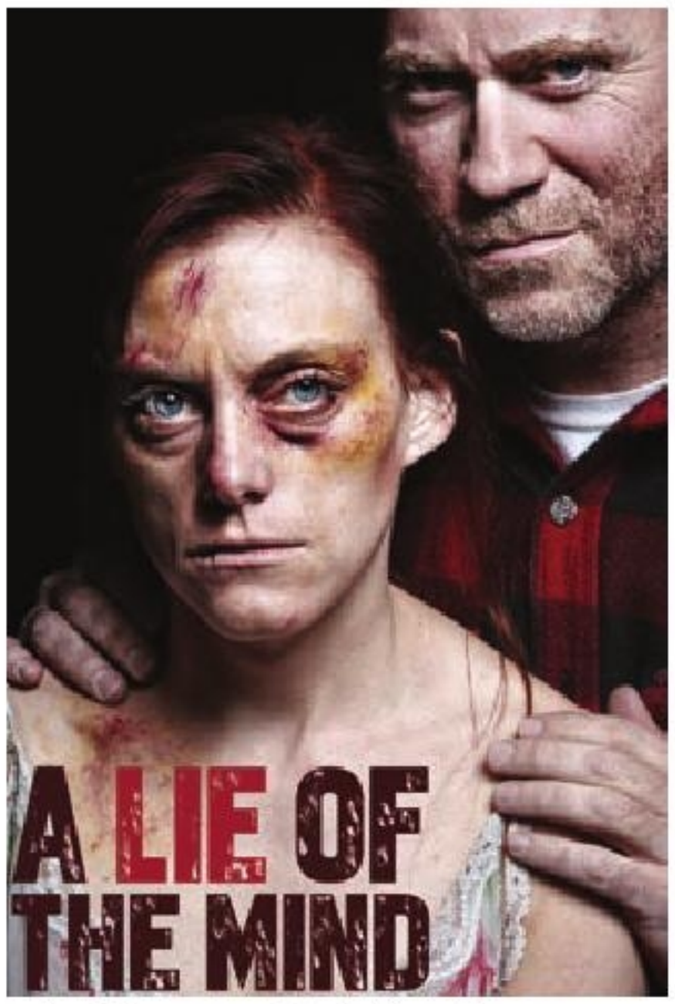
If you like your goods locally made, perhaps you feel the same way about your music? If so, then you probably already know about David Dixon, North Carolina son and Berklee College of Music grad. What you might not know is that Dixon's band, David Dixon Trio, is a member of Leeway's Home Grown Music Network in Mebane — a gang worth checking out. Dixon is a regular at local haunts such as The Pub, The Palm Room, Duck and Dive, Lagerheads, City Limits Saloon and, of course, The Whiskey, where he recently released his full-length self-titled album. Locally recorded (Screen Gems), the album was mastered by multi Grammy Award winner Brian Lucey (think Beck, The Black Keys and Ray Lamontagne) and features guest artists from across the state, including Sean Gregory of Port City reggae band Signal Fire, local as it gets. "The styles range from blues and soul to country, rock and N.C.-acoustic, as well as a little R&B," says Dixon. "Truly something for everyone." But don't take his word for it. Listen for yourself. Info: homegrownmusic.net/bands/david-dixon.

## Pinch and a Dash

In this month's *Salt*, page 15, meet Maggie May, the gentle-natured Canines for Literacy mentor who lights up the faces of her pupils at Northeast Regional Library week after week. The program, which helps children improve their reading skills in a fun, non judgmental way, is one of several funded by Canines for Service, the non profit which also funds Canines for Veterans and Canines for Therapy. On Saturday, March 28, the annual Walk and Dog Dash will help raise funds for Canines for Service and its blossoming programs. Includes vendors; food trucks; music; pet costumes and look alike contests; doggie massage, reiki and belly rubs; paw print and photo booths; and raffle. Registration: $25; $35 (day of event). Hugh MacRae Park, 1799 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: caninesforservice.org.

## This Little Piggy Packed Heat

The fourth annual Step Up For Soldiers Backyard BBQ Cook-Off heats up on Saturday, March 7, where Lake Park Boulevard meets Atlanta Avenue in Carolina Beach. Double-blind judging followed by a day of BBQ sampling, raffles, and music hot and sweet. Lineup includes Junk Yard Mama, Kenny Reeves and TrainWreck, and The Mark Roberts Band (headliners). Free admission; tickets available for sampling. Proceeds benefit Step Up For Soldiers and will help fund their current project, Soldier Build, a transitional home for veterans attending local universities. Gates open at 10:30 a.m.; prizes awarded at 4 p.m. Bragging rights are valid all year. Info: www.stepupforsoldiers.org.




## A Shepard's Flock

New York City, 1985. Nicole Farmer is seated at the Promenade Theatre, right behind playwright Sam Shepard and his then-sweetheart Jessica Lange. It's the final dress rehearsal of the first production of Shepard's tragicomedy, *A Lie of the Mind*, and Farmer can hear him talking to Lange about what's working and what isn't. "I spent the next twenty years wanting to play Beth," says Farmer, who even chose a Sam Shepard monologue for her Juilliard audition. "I essentially owe him for my long and diverse career in the theater." Directing his award-winning play at City Stage is a good start. Eight professional actors will help Farmer breathe this "dense and twisted" material to life on stage. Prepare for a mesmerizing, emotionally raw production that showcases Shepard's distinctive world of disturbed reality and hungry hearts yet will still make you laugh. The cast: Jim Swan, Rachael Moser, Don Baker, Elaine Nalee, Kitty Fitzgibbon, Kara Lashley, Bryce Flint-Sommerville, and Jacob Keohane. *A Lie of the Mind* opens Thursday, March 5, and runs for three weekends. Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 3 p.m. Tickets: $20–25; $18 (educators, seniors and military). City Stage, 21 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 264-2602 or www.citystagenc.com.

## Man of the Hour

On Saturday, March 21, 7 p.m. – 2 a.m., celebrate artist Claude Howell, favorite Wilmington son born 100 years ago this month. Claude Live: A Centennial Celebration Honoring the Life and Legacy of Claude Howell will allow guests to experience the luminosity of Claude's artwork and see it as interpreted through contemporary multimedia, theatrical performance, music and dance. Well-known for his paintings of life on the North Carolina Coast, his commentaries and his journals, which chronicle his experiences and travels for more than sixty years, Claude was and continues to be a Port City darling. Friends of Claude won't want to miss this. "We hope to introduce a new generation to Claude too," says CAM's Jayme Bednarczyk. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: www.cameronartmuseum.org.

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## *1351 Regatta Drive* — *Landfall*

Charming 1-year-old, custom built home overlooking the 9th Fairway of Landfall's famed Pete Dye course & ICWW. From the floor to light fixtures, no expense was spared in the quality of construction and finishes in this professional interior designer's personal home. As you enter, you are greeted by 10 ft. ceilings throughout the 1st floor, an open and flowing floorplan, wide plank oiled antique French oak floors throughout all living areas, and expansive views of the golf course and the ICWW from all bedrooms, great room, dining room and covered porches on each level. The kitchen is a chef's delight, and boasts custom cabinets, Thermador appliances including gas range, built in wall oven, microwave, and refrigerator, granite counter tops and tile backsplash and custom oak island with breakfast bar. Around the corner you will find a cozy family room/study and half bath. On the other side of the 1st floor is the luxurious master suite offering custom cabinets with raised marble counters, oversized tile shower, his and hers huge walk-in closets with custom closet systems. Upstairs boasts a sitting room, 2 bedrooms each with private tiled baths, a walk in attic and unfinished FROG that has over 850 sq.ft. that is insulated and set up for a separate HVAC. This immaculate property is move-in ready and offers low maintenance living, all brick exterior and yard that is maintained by HOA. **$799,900**

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## *1726 Fairway Drive* — *Country Club Terrace*

Classic South Oleander home in one of Wilmington's most desirable, established neighborhoods. This house sits towards the end of a tree lined, cul-de-sac and backs up to the 11th fairway of Cape Fear Country Club's golf course. Offers hardwood floors throughout both levels, a formal living room with masonry fireplace, formal dining room, a study with antique heart of pine paneling, and a large family room with wainscoting and a bay window overlooking the sloping back yard and golf course. It is within walking distance of Cape Fear Country Club and is close to New Hanover Regional Medical Center, downtown, and shopping. **$499,900**

---

## *5032 Nicholas Creek Circle* — *MasonboroForest*

This spacious home is in the heart of sought after Masonboro Forest. Enter through its soaring two story foyer and on to the great room which boasts custom built-in bookcases and television cabinet above the gas fire place and a cathedral ceiling. The kitchen offers granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, lovely cherry stained cabinets, and breakfast bar. A separate breakfast area leads to a deck and a large screened porch overlooking the secluded back yard. This home also offers hardwood floors throughout both levels, four bedrooms, four full baths, and a huge FROG. Substantial first floor master bedroom has a tray ceiling, large walk-in closet, full tile bath with double vanities, separate shower and whirlpool tub. Home office/study on the first floor could be a fifth bedroom and has an adjoining full bath. The neighborhood offers a sizeable clubhouse, pool, and tennis courts and is centrally located. **$429,000**

---

## *1542 Magnolia Place* — *Magnolia Place/Oleander*

This home sits at the end of an oak lined quiet cul-de-sac with side yard overlooking the 10th fairway of Cape Fear Country Club's golf course. This 3 bedroom, 3 bath home offers all formal areas plus sunroom, a cozy den and breakfast room, and a separate children's suite upstairs with bedroom, full bath and huge playroom. It is within walking distance within Cape Fear Country Club and is close to New Hanover Regional Medical Center, downtown, and shopping and dining. **$399,000**

---

## *8422 Emerald Dunes Road* — *Porter's Neck Plantation*

Immaculately maintained, move in ready home located in Porter's Neck Plantation. This 3 bedroom, 2 bath home offers hardwood floors throughout all living areas and 10 foot ceilings throughout the entire home. The large master suite is complete with sitting area, spacious bathroom with raised height counter tops, dual vanities, frameless shower and separate bathtub. The kitchen features custom cherry cabinets, granite countertops, and new stainless appliances and a breakfast nook with bay window. The great room has gas logs and custom built-ins. Enjoy the glassed in sunroom for year round use which is not included in heated square footage and a patio. Yard is maintained by HOA for low maintenance living. The gated community of Porter's Neck offers picnic area, day dock, and boat ramp on ICWW and is just minutes to shopping, dining and the beach . **$379,900**

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# Maggie May

*This therapy dog knows how to work a room*

By Ashley Wahl

**Maggie May** is a born enchanter. With eyes like polished amber and hair white as snow, there is something bewitching — perhaps even mystical — about her appearance. But what renders her utterly magnetic is her poise and gentle nature. When Maggie May enters a room, she brightens it.

"She's a love sponge," says Dorothy Mildenberg of the white golden retriever named, of course, for the Rod Stewart song.

Maggie is a certified therapy dog who, with her owner, Dorothy, has been working as a Canines for Literacy mentor for five years. To see her saunter through a crowd is like watching a field of daffodils open one by one.

"She knows how to work a room," says Dorothy. She also knows when it's time to sit and listen. Maggie and Dorothy are a team.

**

On a bright but cold Wednesday afternoon, Dorothy and Maggie are seated in a spartan room at Northeast Regional Library, the electromagnetic hum of a fluorescent bulb sure and steady in the background. When Billy arrives, Maggie stands to greet him.

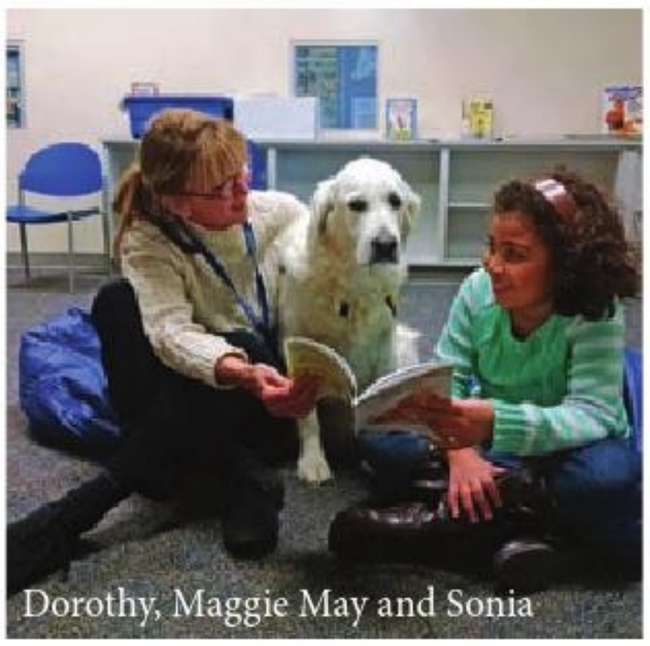
"She likes to lay on my feet," explains Billy, who beams as he walks toward the blue plastic chair beside Dorothy, hugging tight a copy of Rusty Staub's *Few and Chosen: Defining Mets Greatness Across the Eras*. As he gets settled, Maggie plops down and curls into a ball, her body warm against Billy's sneakers.

"I like that," he says, his laugh as pure as a child's.

At 50, Billy is not your average Canines for Literacy pupil, but he is here for the same reason — to improve his reading skills. He picks up where they left off last week, delving into a passage about Casey Stengel, the left-handed Hall of Famer who, before baseball, dreamed of becoming a dentist. Maggie closes her eyes.

Billy's speech is sure and steady, but when he comes across something interesting — like how Davey Johnson won three Golden Glove Awards and made the All-Star team four times — he looks up at Dorothy and says, "That's great."

Maggie shifts, lets him know she's listening too.



Dorothy, Maggie May and Sonia

**

Therapy dogs help reduce one's blood pressure and heart rate.

When Carly, 14, arrives for her reading appointment, she seems a bit nervous. But get her talking about animals — Maggie or her own dog, Bear-Bear — and she lights up.

"My mom's friend says I'm an animal whisperer," says Carly.

Maggie sits quietly by her side.

**

Six-year-old Sonia Rose sinks into a bean bag chair with an illustrated book about a puppy named Biscuit. Maggie snuggles up beside her as she reads, but the biscuit that Maggie is most excited about is the one she'll get when Sonia finishes the story. She waits patiently.

"We have a special routine we go through after we've read a book," explains Dorothy, who prompts Maggie to sit in the corner while Sonia hides.

Treat in hand, Sonia crouches behind a Seussian chair — the room's only accent piece. When given the signal, Maggie finds her right away.

"Remember, we put the biscuit on our hand like a dinner plate so we never get our fingers pinched," says Dorothy. "Yes, that's the way. Now let's get you a hand wipe."

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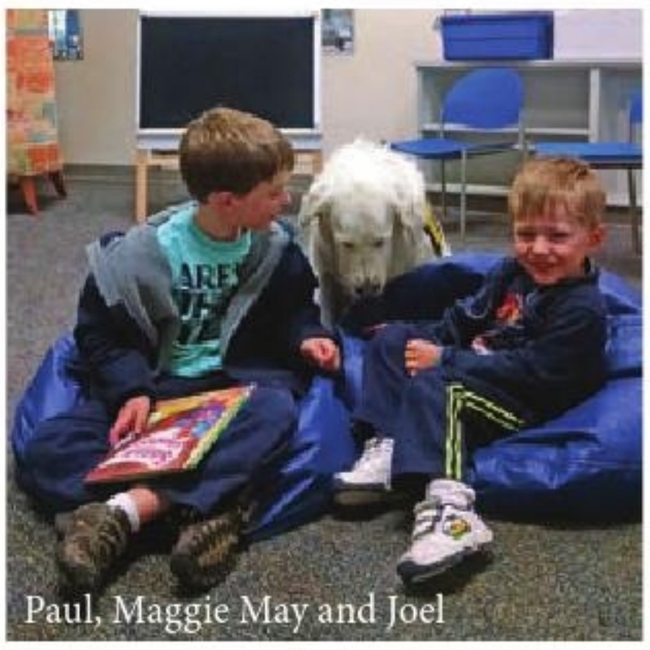

Paul, Maggie May and Joel

When Paul and his little brother Joel cozy up beside Maggie on the floor, they vaguely resemble a scene from *The Neverending Story*.

Paul is reading a book about a groundhog who comes down with the flu on February 1.

*"You need hot clover soup and bed rest for two days."*

*"How many?" asked Groundhog.*

*"Two, two," hooted Dr. Owl.*

Dorothy gently interrupts. "Let's go back and read that like an owl would say it," she says. "Like it would say *Hoot! Hoot!*"

*"Two! Two!"*

Paul is working on the art of inflection, but what he is really good at is predicting the book's resolution — who gets the job as substitute groundhog.

Armadillo.

"I read the last page first," he admits.

Midway through the book, Maggie slumps onto her side, pushing her back into Paul as she stretches out her legs. The boy takes the cue, and though he never stops reading, he begins petting her neck, working his fingers through her ivory locks the way one might squish into a bowl of dough. Maggie neither whines nor wags. A good teacher knows that a reader must stay focused.

Armadillo sees his shadow, but spring is here — you can see it in the smiling faces of Maggie's pupils.

---

For more information about Canines for Service's "Canines for Literacy" program or to make an appointment, call Northeast Regional Library at (910) 798-6373 or Myrtle Grove Library at (910) 798-6393. To learn about Canines for Service, visit www.caninesforservice.org.

*Our spy, senior editor Ashley Wahl, is prone to wander.*

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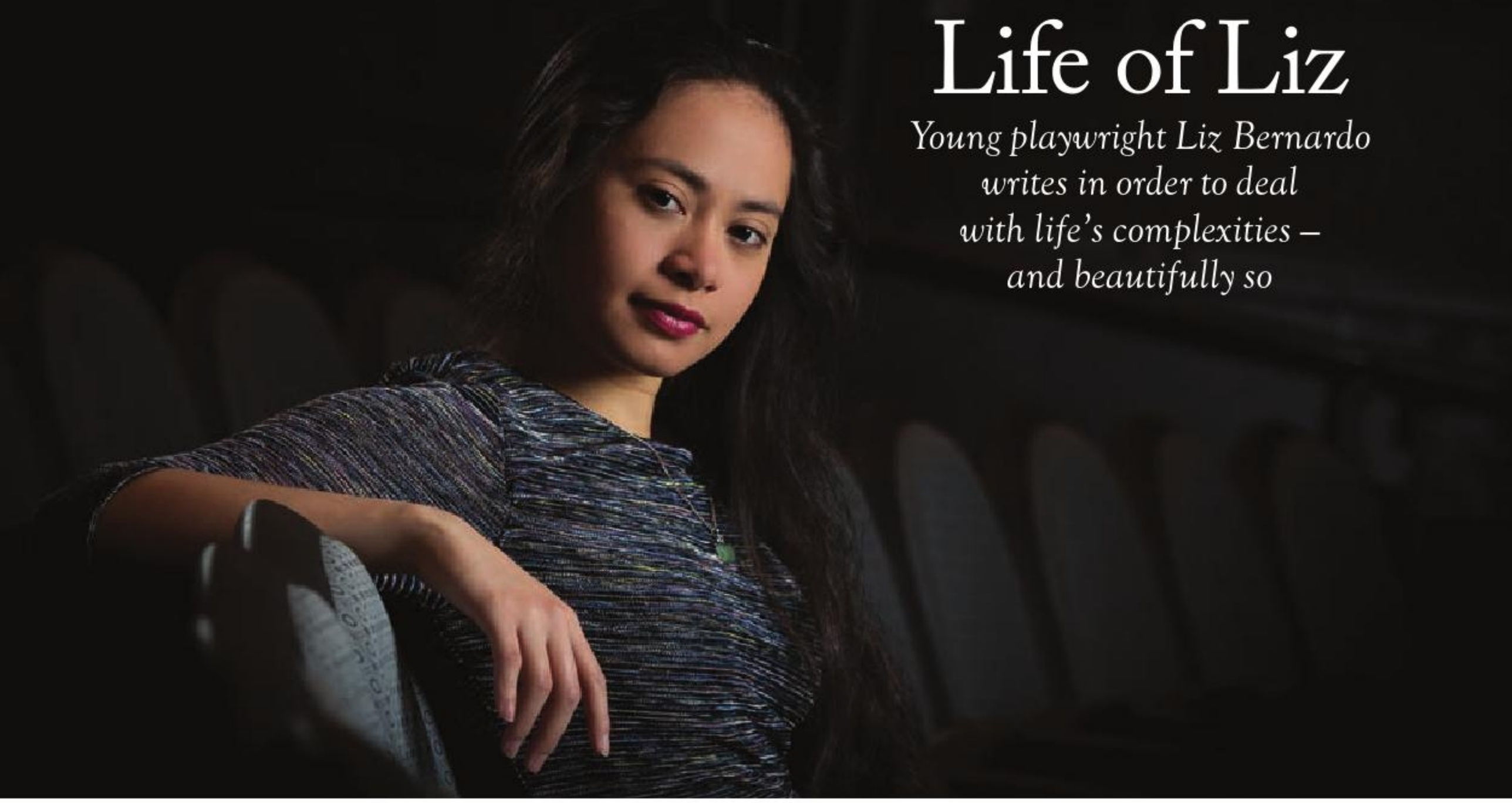

# Life of Liz

*Young playwright Liz Bernardo writes in order to deal with life's complexities – and beautifully so*

By Gwenyfar Rohler

Besides writing my regular "Stage Life" column for *Salt*, I also work as a theater reviewer in town. A couple of years ago I reviewed *Dialogues of Strange Bedfellows*, a showcase of local writing and performers (mostly short scenes and monologues) at The Browncoat Pub & Theatre. The director was a young woman from UNCW named Liz Bernardo. It was her first show in the community, and I gave it a no-fluff, honest review that focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the evening and pointed out that Bernardo had skill, but that she needed more experience to develop the meaningful work she is capable of.

Theater reviews in a small town are stressful for both the reviewer and the reviewees; there is just no way around that. So I was surprised by Bernardo's response to her review, which she posted on her Facebook page: "Pretty solid first review as a director!" It showed a lot of maturity, and class. It also made me want to know more about this intriguing young woman who seems to be genuinely committed to growing as an artist. Feedback is something she craves and actually implements. For one so young (she will graduate from UNCW this spring), that's a pretty surprising trait.

"I use writing to cope with things and to understand everything that is happening to me. So a lot of my scripts, and writings in general, are really personal because I just kind of write to deal." Liz Bernardo speaks specifically, and definitively at all times – but especially when discussing *Bare Bones*, her autobiographical play about eating disorders.

"At the time I had started writing it for that reason. I went through several edits of it before getting to the version we used for the show – which I still don't think is a final version, especially after feedback."

Like many of us, Bernardo has no idea how incredible she is: Smart, beautiful, and always immaculately put together in dresses that flatter her petite figure and complement her long black hair and dark Filipino features. Once you know she has battled an eating disorder, the perfectly put together world is not so surprising – but the breadth of what she has accomplished is.

*Bare Bones* was staged at TheatreNOW last October. "Being able to do that for me was really closure of that part of my life . . . That's a lot for a person to deal with not even having an eating disorder, but disordered eating in general . . . it's difficult."

Produced by Up All Night Productions, a new theater company founded by Bernardo, local actor Nick Reed and playwright Zeb Mims, the show was the second they produced in their debut season, which included an original show by Mims and a film-to-stage adaptation. That's key to understanding Bernardo. When she wants something, she goes after it. In this case, the object of her desire was a theater company.

Like many things, it started as sort of a joke. Bernardo and Reed were working on a production of Bert V. Royal's *Dog Sees God* at The Browncoat Pub & Theatre. "We spent so much time together because we were also co-stage-managing. We also constructed and painted the set and all the props. While we were doing that, we started joking around that we should start a theater company," Bernardo reminisces. At that time, she and Reed were president and vice president of STAGE Company, the student-run theater organization on campus

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

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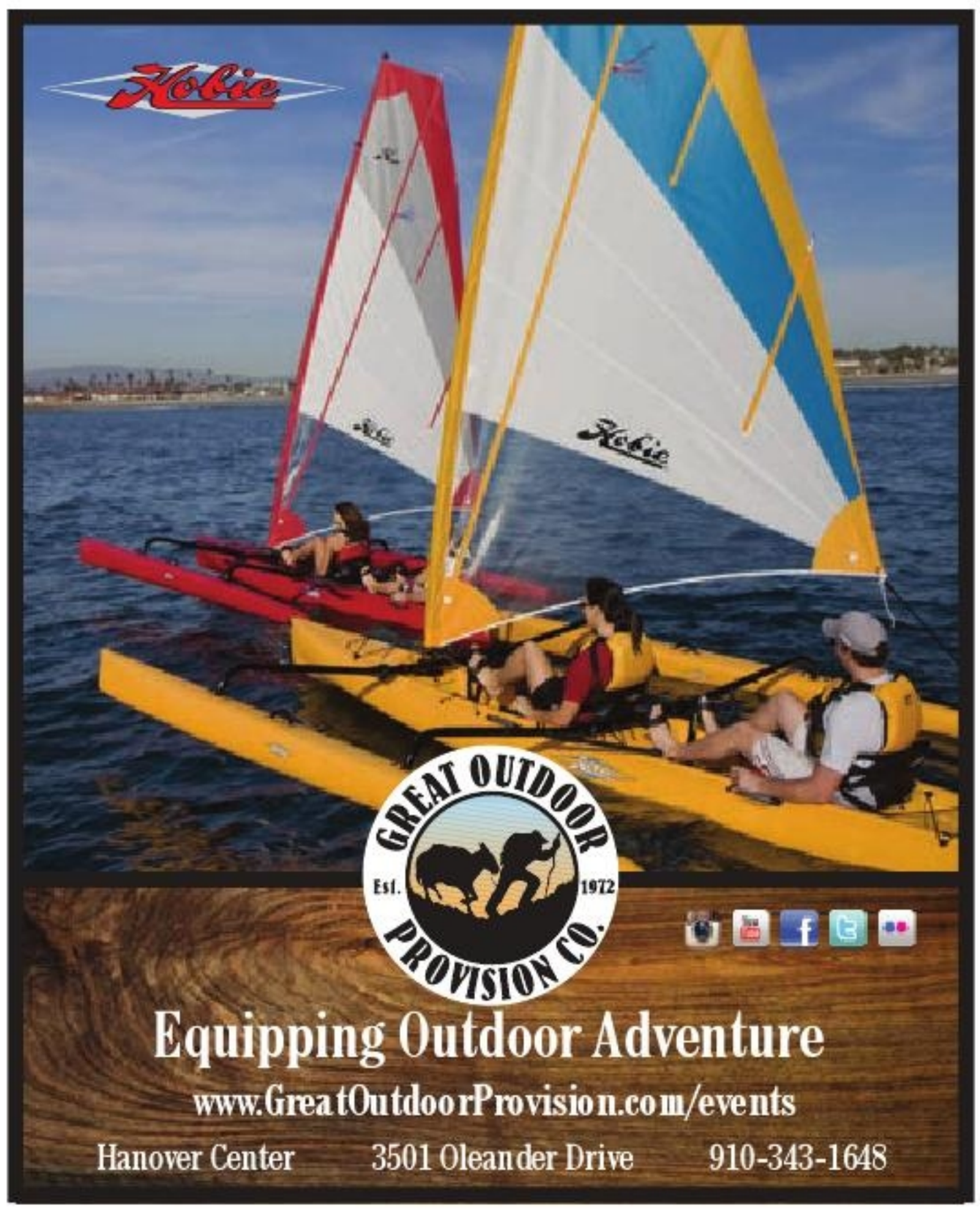


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at UNCW. Enter STAGE Company's graduating artistic director, Zeb Mims. "He wanted to do a similar thing to what Nick and I were talking about . . . bringing the same energy of young people doing new theater into the community. Zeb really pushed for that to happen."

STAGE Company produced one of Mims' scripts — but due to limited resources, it was staged in a conference room, not even a black box theater, let alone a full proscenium theater. "We decided we wanted to do it in a better space than that," Bernardo explains. The Browncoat offered them space on the production calendar, and Up All Night theater company was born.

They are a team that really gelled and in the last year, they have produced theater that runs the gamut from rom-coms to Bernardo's more provocative eating disorder piece. "I offered it because I wanted us to do a play with more of a social message. I have a lot of feminist themes. I like to do things that deal with current issues, and I wanted to do a stage production of something that did the same thing."

Bernardo originally came to UNCW for marine biology camp. "Then I realized I get seasick. That wouldn't have exactly worked." She came back to study film in college. "Originally I wanted to do film because I wanted to do animation. Then I went to a camp at the Savannah College of Arts and Design and realized: I can't draw. That was a big determining factor in that."

Though she has taken a bit of a detour through theater, she is back to filmmaking. This year she penned two scripts: *The Seven Misogynies of Stella Moore* and *The Revenge of Kate Munroe*. The companion pieces both turn on the conceit that women, tired of being ignored or treated as empty-headed sex-objects in the film world, decide to pursue a spree of righting those wrongs. Bernardo observes that the filmmaking experience is "kind of like having a tech week [for a play] every single day. And I love it." Her smile hits a hundred watts. "There's a lot more you can do without talking in film — that can be shown in a bigger way than theater . . . It can be a lot more subtle than theater. In addition, I like to use a ton of different places and locations, rather than the unity of time and place for theater."

Bernardo packs a lot of verve and intensity into a small frame and seems to vibrate with excitement when she talks about her films. When asked how she continues to do so much, she credits her mother: "Ever since I was little, she told me I could pretty much try to do whatever I wanted to do. That really stuck with me and I kept that really close to my heart, and I gave myself 110 percent to anything I tried to do." It seems to have paid off: She was recently accepted to Mary Baldwin's Shakespeare M. Literature and MFA program. Wilmington's loss will be Staunton, Virginia's gain.

*Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.*

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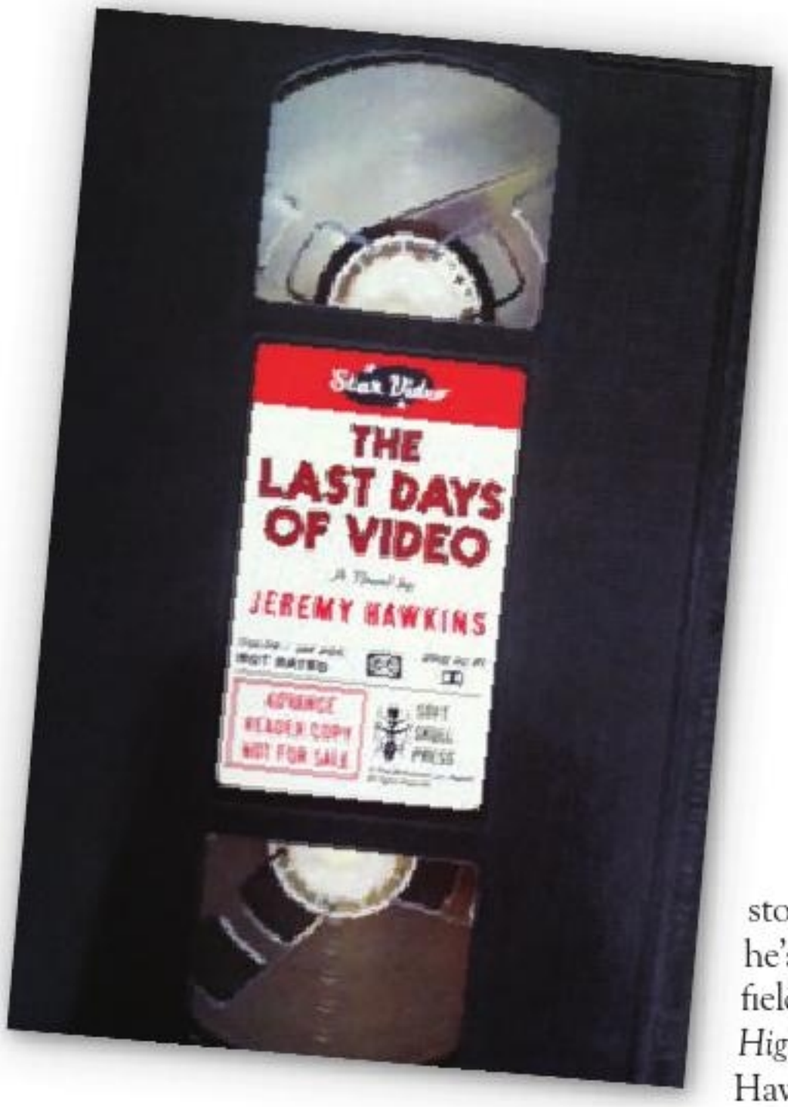
# Last Tango in West Appleton

*Darkly comic, The Last Days of Video takes us deeply into the minds – and souls – of true film junkies*




By Brian Lampkin

**Technological** advancement always leaves the crumbled remains of a culture it has decimated. "The more humanity advances, the more it is degraded," Flaubert wrote, and surely he was presciently thinking of the death of the VHS video when he penned it. Writer Jeremy Hawkins lived through the demise of the video store — he spent ten years working at the much-loved VisArt Video in Carrboro — and survived to write the comic novel *The Last Days of Video* (Soft Skull Press, 2015, $15.95).

Hawkins, like most video/bookstore/record clerks, is insanely knowledgeable about his chosen line of work. One of the great pleasures of the novel is the vast display of film arcana; the reader can enjoy the use of both popular and obscure film references with confidence in the writer's command of his subject. When the characters in *Last Days* carry on about the relative worth of director John Cassavetes ("Pierce thinks Cassavetes is overrated. Not visually stimulating."), or *Night of the Living Dead* ("That's Romero's first zombie movie. *Dawn of the Dead* is better."), you know that their opinions, no matter how obnoxious, are well-earned.

There is of course a cliché at work here: The too smart, too hip, too drunk social outcasts who populate cafes and cultural outlets like video stores are common comic fodder. Hawkins knows he's working over well-worn ground, and he walks the fields with nods of respect for the genre. Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* is the most apparent reference, and Hawkins is up-front (an early chapter is called "Why Fidelity") about the sampling. Every chapter is a clever reworking of a movie title, and sometimes the chapters splice the storylines and motifs from the movie into the narrative of the book. When that happens effectively, like in the chapter called "The Discreet Charm of Clarissa Wheat," the novel deepens. More often, the chapters are simply clever and fun ("Y Tu Tabitha Tambien") or sometimes uninspired ("Jeff and Waring's Excellent Adventure").

But fun is not to be underrated! *The Last Days of Video* is never less than a joy to read, probably because Hawkins' outsized love for movies infects every page. Could I list for you every film or actor mentioned in the novel? No, I would overwhelm my limited word count before I got through the third chapter. Let me just say that this is the only novel I know in which being called "Ed Begley Jr." works as a withering insult.

Still, Hawkins' characters are full of life or, if you will, anti-life. We're tempted to think of them as locked in the false reality of their film world, but really they are locked in the false reality of Hawkins' fictional world. Novels are no more "real" than films, and it's a subtle trick that Hawkins plays on us by playing off the unreal film world against the perceived real world of West Appleton, North Carolina — a fictionalized Chapel Hill/Carrboro.

Waring Wax, the owner of Star Video in downtown West Appleton, is a misanthropic know-it-all who lacks a single social grace. He's Ignatius J. Reilly from *A Confederacy of Dunces,* except he adheres to classic film instead of classical philosophy. Waring makes pronouncements about film, but at least the films he hates are still loved for the fact that they are films. People

he just hates, though there is something like happiness in Waring's dressing down of an entitled, pompous customer. "'People like you amaze me . . . I've seen you skishing around on your bicycle, with all your bicycle buddies. Bragging at the Open Eye about your workouts, your four-by-four hundreds, your ten-by-ten millions, or whatever, in your tight sweaty shorts. . . . And thank you for this opportunity, because it's been a while, but I think it's time for our 'firing a customer' dance."

Another lost customer. But the book is really about Alaura Eden, the longtime Star Video manager and the reason the store has survived into the 21st century. Alaura is the center of the city — the person whose spirit and nature seem to personify the youthful hope for a college town's everyday life. Everyone loves Alaura, even Waring in his own way. It's only Alaura who is not satisfied with Alaura. She's a seeker, always looking for a religious experience that will reveal a way to true happiness. Eventually she winds up in the cultish, money-obsessed "Reality Center" and must be saved by her low-rent, embarrassing video store family of choice.

But these are the last days of video, so the end is preordained. Hawkins cares enough for his characters to help us see them through the dark room and back into the light. And like Paul Thomas Anderson's *Boogie Nights*, this is the story of how outsiders make an intentional community care about what the straight world might think of them. Other issues arise — gentrification, the perils of fame, the precipice of the creative mind — but they are handled lightly. Michael Chabon's *Telegraph Avenue* is a novel about a dying record store in Oakland, California, which expands the story into serious concerns of our times. Hawkins is more content with containing the story in its comic narrative of the lives of a few video store clerks.

Jeremy Hawkins has moved on from video clerkdom and now works at Flyleaf Books in Chapel Hill. I hope his co-workers understand that he is listening in, taking notes, preparing a new novel on another institution facing extinction, though he tells me he's working on a novel about our drowning education system. Hawkins has an M.F.A. from UNC Wilmington, where he studied with Clyde Edgerton, whom Hawkins credits with being "singlehandedly responsible for anything good in this novel."

The book launch party for *The Last Days of Video* will be held on March 10 at Flyleaf Books, but look for Hawkins at bookstores across North Carolina as he tours the state throughout the spring.

*Brian Lampkin is an owner of Scuppernong Books in Greensboro.*

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# On the Road Again

*With his thumb out and his mind open to adventure, a veteran hitchhiker resets his inner clock and once more finds amazing grace in the lives of others*

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK HOLMBERG

It's a cool, bright, fall morning and I'm hitchhiking again, standing on the on-ramp to I-95 in downtown Richmond, Virginia.

My cardboard sign says "95 S. NC." The other side says, "I-40 E. Wilmington" . . . my home just 280 miles away.

My thumb is out. It feels great — that special mix of uncertainty, apprehension, anticipation — spiced lightly with a little fear that only hitching can deliver.

I had dropped off a motorcycle in Richmond and decided to hitch back home to Wilmington because I wanted to see if hitchhiking was still good in our modern, fearful times. A generation or two ago, a guy beside the road with his thumb out meant fellow traveler, an adventurer, perhaps. Now, many think bum or psychopath — cinema serial killer.

Hitching for me has always been a thing of the spirit, a way to reset my inner clock and remind me that my existence is completely grace-based. It started in high school in the early '70s, hitching to class instead of riding the bus. By the time I graduated, I had thumbed all over the eastern United States and had developed a strong appetite for roaming and freedom that never faded.

I've since hitched across the country four times, most recently as a newspaper columnist in 2008 to feel the mood of the country as the recession got really heavy and the seismic presidential election loomed. Richmond to Seattle in five raw, wild days.

For much of my life, even while raising four children, I'd take shorter hitching trips from time to time to stay somewhat grounded while visiting friends a state or two away. That's because you have to turn off the "me" channel, fully quiet yourself, open yourself in your world — and somewhat suspend self-preservation — to successfully hitchhike.

Traffic is dangerous, and you really have to know where to stand, how to carry yourself to get where you're going. Several times I've been picked up by suicidal people — one guy had a gun in his lap — and numerous times by deeply troubled folks who needed an open heart to pour theirs into. I've driven for lots of people who picked me up because they were too tired or too drunk to drive.

But mostly, they are good, interesting souls who have been banged around a bit. Lots of former military guys who hitched off-base back when a uniform and a thumb meant stop.

Older hippies and drifters, dreamers, outsiders, ex-cons, cruising gays and religious souls with a message. A surprising number of women driving alone will stop, from motherly factory workers to college girls with a problem they need to share.

All that flashes through my mind as I'm standing on the Maury Street on-ramp on this latest journey. Waiting. Five minutes, ten . . . twenty.

Maybe things have changed . . .

Then a cluttered SUV pulls over. It's Michael Jackson of Dinwiddie, a globe-trotting, almost chain-smoking tunneling contractor. He's a real wild man with an upside-down face — bald on top and a big, mutton-chop-py beard below. He takes a liking to me and invites me to go to Honduras with him one day to tangle with willing women and do some wild partying. He goes twenty minutes out of his way to drop me off in a good spot south of Petersburg.

Minutes later, trucker Louis Espinoza of Florida pulls his rig over and I climb up.

"I normally don't pick up hitchhikers."

He's quiet. My very basic Spanish skills get him chatting a little. He asks if I've ever met someone who lost a loved one on 9/11.

No, I answer.

He drives on, then says, "I don't talk about this much."

Turns out, he lost his wife, Fanny Espinoza, when the Twin Towers fell. They had two children at the time, a boy, 11, and a girl, 9. "9/11," he says.

That crazy morning he was hauling for Home Depot in upstate New York when she called and said a plane hit the building and it was on fire.

He told her to get out. Fanny, a paralegal in school to be a lawyer, told her husband she was getting a group of people together to start down the stairs. But she was on the 102nd floor. There was no going down, no getting out.

"She didn't want to tell me she was trapped and make me nervous. That was the last time I talked with her."

When we stop for fuel and lunch, he shows me his tattoo honoring his wife.

You just never know what people are carrying.

We ride on, now chatting like family in his smooth 2004 Volvo tractor-trailer with 1,400,000 miles on the clock. He's going to Orlando and I get out at the I-40 cutoff and flip over my sign. (I later Googled Fanny's story, which was just as he said it. And no, he hadn't talked publicly about it, although reporters mentioned her trucker husband.)

Then a big, long wait at this sketchy spot at the I-95, I-40 split. I'm thinking there sure are a lot of nice cars in this bad economy. The usual hitching doubts also come to mind.

Finally, Richard pulls over. He's an electrical contractor who has done some war-related work in Afghanistan. He tells me how he fell in love with a Chinese woman also working there who was injured by a suicide bomber. He was able to get her medical help, but he lost track of her in the process. He's a lonely guy who got me out of a tough spot.

After nearly another hour-long wait, Felipe stops at the Mount Olive exit and drives me a smooth twenty miles, dropping me off by Duplin Winery in Rose Hill, where he works. He has a heavy Latino accent and his face is disfigured from some kind of bad childhood accident. Aftershave.

I stop in the gas station at that exit for refreshment and the woman who runs it notices I'm hitching (backpack, no car) and says, "I hope you shuffle on."

Shuffle on? Wow, that's pretty cold. But it's also kind of funny, and I'm thinking it would be a good Led Zeppelin song as I wait for a ride at this most beautifully landscaped Rose Hill on-ramp. (It's still legal in most states to thumb at these spots.)

Sunset is looming and it's threatening rain. Need some mojo here.

Then Cilbano, a steelworker from Raleigh (and south Mexico) swoops over and rescues me just as the drizzle begins. He's a sweet young guy with two kids and a swollen face from a welding flash burn earlier in the week. I offer him some aloe from my kit.

He's excited about visiting his brother in Wilmington off Kerr Avenue, and I'm excited about getting a ride the rest of the way home. So we have a fun, bilingual rest of the journey.

As we arrive in town, the sunset sky clears and flames up in tigerish reds and oranges, making me think of that Jorma Kaukonen lyric, "It's raining somewhere down the road, but that don't mean a thing."

Cilbano insists on going about five miles out of his way to drop me off at my downtown doorstep on Queen Street. I give him my phone number and invite him and his family over for a cook-out.

Chances are, I won't see him again. But he and the others are family, a rather rare bunch — strangers willing to take a chance on each other in this strange, challenging, sometimes distrustful and often wondrous journey called life.

Shuffle on!

*Mark Holmberg, longtime reporter and columnist for CBS-6 in Richmond, Virginia and the Richmond Times-Dispatch, is our King of Queen Street.*

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# Where We Belong

*The uncomfortable things we unearth about ourselves may in time become the true definition of hope*

By Lavonne J. Adams

I was in the eighth grade, and a few weeks from confirmation at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. I sang in the junior choir, had earned a medal for perfect attendance from the Royal School of Church Music, which I wore on a grosgrain ribbon, resplendent against the white cassock of my choir robe. My father, the choirmaster, played the pipe organ during most church services and the occasional wedding or funeral. Over the years, I had learned the rotation of the minister's sermons, my favorite the story of Father Damien and the lepers. I felt that our church was a place where I belonged.

In preparation for confirmation, I had completed the required number of Saturday religion classes, had memorized the Nicene Creed and the Twenty-third Psalm. A new white dress hung in my closet. After the Sunday service, my family would lunch at the nearby Lafayette Yacht Club to celebrate, and I was allowed to invite three guests.

I had recently entered junior high school, a time of shifting allegiances and new friendships. Before homeroom every morning, I waited in the hallway with a small group of girls I had just met, yet with whom a companionship had begun to bloom. I decided to invite these three girls to the celebration. Each said that they would have to check with their respective parents, but would let me know the next day.

Two of the three accepted immediately, the third seemed nervous when she responded, stating that her mother wasn't certain that she would be welcome in my church. They had decided it would be best if she declined my invitation. I didn't know what to say, yet must have mumbled something before changing the topic to a homework assignment or a television program or a discussion of what someone was wearing that day.

It was 1967, and I lived in Norfolk, Virginia. I am white, and the girl who declined my invitation was black. I marvel, now, at how puzzled I was by her response, at how genuinely naïve I was. The school that I attended was racially integrated, a feeder school for the high school that I would later learn, firsthand, took pride in the fact that the student population was pretty close to a perfect racial blend. But that knowledge was two years in the future.

I was perturbed by the notion that this young woman might not be welcome in my church, so that night, I told my father about the conversation. I expected him to say that her worries were unfounded, but he didn't. Instead, he paused, then noted that one of the parishioners, an elderly woman, was accompanied by her maid whenever she attended services, and as far as he knew, no one had ever complained.

Complained?

I wonder if my face reflected the shock I felt.

Let me interject that my father wasn't father-of-the-year material, was more likely to be cast as a walk-on in *The Secret Storm* as opposed to *Father Knows Best*. Yet like the people who fascinate us the most, he was a blend of the compelling — smart, funny, talented — with the puzzling, a confessed philanderer who loved expensive cars. In this case, he spoke in an unexpectedly candid manner, a tone that was novel to our relationship. Gazing at the wall on the far side of the dining table, he framed his words haltingly, as if he were considering each phrase. He told me that his mother, my grandmother, was bigoted. He said that he had been raised on a diet of racial slurs. I thought of the copy of *Little Black Sambo* on the bookcase in my grandparents' hallway, inscribed to my father, a gift from his parents when he was young. I had considered it quaint. And then I thought of how I heard my grandmother offhandedly refer to some small Negro children as "pickaninnies." I cringe as I now type the word, which my spell check refuses to acknowledge, no matter how I adjust the spelling. My father was raised in Pennsylvania, the son of an electrical engineer. So much for the categorization of racial hatred in the 1960s as being a "Southern issue."

Dad rationalized my grandmother's behavior as "the way she was raised." On the other hand, he explained that he understood that the world was changing, and that passing on that legacy would be handing his children a burden. I swear, I had never heard him utter a racial slur, even in the midst of one of his diatribes when caught in deplorable traffic, invectives that included such gems as "Jesus Christ on a crutch." My siblings and I tried to stifle our laughter as we ducked down onto the floorboards beneath the back seat of the car, equally hysterical and scandalized by the words that sometimes tumbled from his mouth.

During the hundred year anniversary of the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision, the foundation for the determination of "separate but equal," I taught a course that investigated contemporary confessional poetry. We read and discussed *Out of the South*, by Neal Bowers, a collection which focuses on the author's "conversion experience" — the acknowledgment that the seeds of racism are found within oneself, coupled with the determination to uproot those seeds.

Each student in the class was responsible for writing a confessional poem. Many described romantic attraction to someone of a different race, and how conflicted they felt as a result of those relationships — not about their desires, per se, but about the reaction that they anticipated from older members of their families. Most of them had read Shakespeare; I wonder if they considered themselves as contemporary versions of Romeo and Juliet.

Any moment of enlightenment can be labeled "epiphany," a word that rings of religion. Writing classes teach us to unearth these moments from our pasts as if they were truffles or ginseng. I wonder, now, if these former students will one day talk about those conflicted emotions with their children. I wonder if their children will, in turn, be shocked by the lives we once led. Epiphany, the true definition of hope.

*Lavonne J. Adams, formerly the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished poet for Eastern North Carolina, is the author of Through the Glorieta Pass and two award-winning chapbooks.*

# Comfort Food at Jester's Café

*From the unspeakable tragedy of her murdered son, Patty Proutey created an enrichment program for at-risk kids that saved her own life in the process*

By Dana Sachs

If you were living in Wilmington on December 13, 2012, you probably remember the murder of Joshua Proutey. The 19-year-old college student was leaving his job as night manager at the Hannah Block Community Arts Center downtown when he was held up at gunpoint, robbed of his cellphone, $10, and a submarine sandwich, then shot in the head. The four people responsible for the crime ran away, leaving him on the ground in the parking lot. He died there.

Within a week, police followed a tip and arrested the perpetrators. Three of them confessed and provided details of the crime. After plea agreements, those three are serving sentences of twenty-five to thirty-five years; Quintel Grady, the gunman, will remain in prison for the rest of his life.

These are facts that Josh's mother, Patty Proutey, lives with every day. Patty, a nursing supervisor in upstate New York at the time, was expecting her son to arrive for a visit that weekend. Instead, on the morning after his death, police came to notify her at the hospital where she worked and, well, you can imagine.

Patty never returned to that job. She never returned to that life, either. For a while, she rented an apartment in Myrtle Beach, which was close enough to allow her to drive to Wilmington for court dates without forcing her to spend much time in the city where her son had died. "I was only able to come for a few hours at a time," she told me.

Patty and I were talking at a small table near a window in Jester's Café in Wilmington, where she now lives, and the story of how she ended up moving to the city where her son was killed is pretty much the story of how she has learned to live in the world without him.

"My constant thought was, 'Why?'" Patty told me. "Why did they have to kill him? What's wrong with these people? Why did we [she and Josh's father] allow him to come to school here? Why did they think he had money? Why did they choose him? And, after he gave them money, why did they shoot him? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?"

District Attorney Ben David, who became a source of support for Patty, eventually suggested that she stop asking that question. "He told me that chasing the 'whys' is like chasing the elusive ghost. You can spend the rest of your life asking, or you can accept that you'll never know." That was the point at which she began to see a way forward.

Six months after her son's death, Patty established Journey4Josh, a nonprofit Wilmington foundation that raises funds to pay for enrichment programs for at-risk kids, like woodworking classes at Kids Making It or guitar lessons at Dreams of Wilmington. The money provides "the extra things their families can't afford," she explained.

If the connection between murder and music lessons isn't obvious, Patty spells it out pretty clearly. "Quintel Grady was a child at one time. If some intervention had occurred, maybe he could have seen another path than robbing, stealing and killing." Patty's not trying to fix the whole world, just help one individual at a time. "If I could save one person from pulling a trigger," she told me, "that would save one life."

Early last year, Patty moved to Wilmington. The city she could once only endure for a few hours at a time now offers its balm to her. She meets people who knew Josh "not just as the boy who was murdered." They knew him

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

as a student who wanted to become a paramedic, and they knew him as a teenager who — she laughed and adopted a look of maternal disapproval here — "skateboarded to places he was not supposed to go."

Patty has also found comfort in the unlikeliest of locations, the parking lot where he died. "It's sacred to me," she said about touching the ground where he last stood. "People say, 'How could you put yourself through that?' But I wasn't putting myself through anything. I was healing."

These days, Patty often eats at Jester's, a companionable little house-turned-restaurant on Castle Street where it feels like everybody knows everybody else. She first tasted Brunswick stew in North Carolina, and now she comes in nearly every week for the Jester's version, served Fridays. "It's a meal in itself," Patty calls the rich broth laden with smoked sausage, chicken, potatoes, lima beans and corn.

Jester's makes almost everything from scratch and, in addition to daily soup specials, always offers two kinds of quiche (one vegetarian; one not) as well as sandwiches and salads. We tried a spinach, tomato and feta quiche. That trio of ingredients is a well-known favorite, but, as any failed baker knows, the crust is the challenge. Jester's quiche crust combines flour, salt, and butter in a way that's particularly flaky and delicious. Equally luscious was the Newcastle Pimento Cheese Deluxe Sandwich, which balances sharp homemade pimento cheese, sweet caramelized onions, ripe tomato and crispy bacon, all on flavorful rye. For dessert, we tried an Oreo Walnut Fudge Brownie topped with whipped cream ("it's more like fudge, in a good way," said Patty) and an enormous slice of caramel icing-covered almond pound cake, which comes from a local bakery. Normally, Patty doesn't like icing ("sweet on top of sweet" she called it), but she ate this one.

In recent months, Patty has received letters from two of the people responsible for Josh's death, both asking her to visit them in prison. She plans to do that. Daniel Henry, she told me, was only 17 when he committed the crime. "He's going to spend the next twenty-five years in prison. I need to let him know that I don't see him as a monster."

We had finished our lunch and, as a parent myself, I was still trying to understand her compassion. "How can you have such forgiveness?"

Her expression turned solemn. "It takes no effort," she said. "It's a spiritual thing, less religion and more of a spiritual connection to God." The possibility that Quintel Grady could receive the death penalty for Josh's death, she said, had given her no solace. "The idea of someone being put to death in exchange for Joshua's life doesn't work. There's no comfort in knowing that another person is dead. The very worst punishment we have is not enough for justice. It doesn't fix me at all."

"What does?" I asked.

Patty shook her head. "There's no fixing." Her work with Journey4Josh, though, has helped. "It's saved my life," she said.

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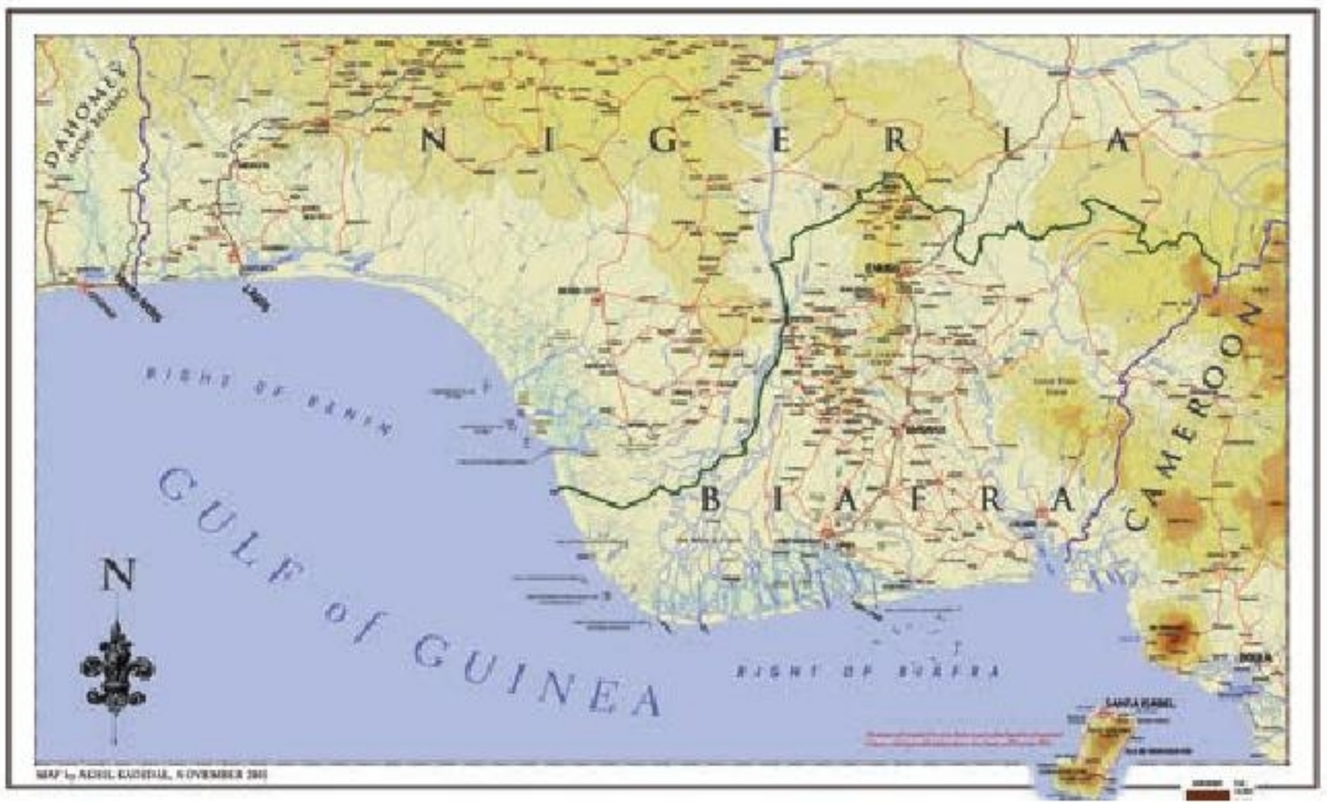
You can learn more about Journey4Josh, or make a donation to fund enrichment activities for low-income children, at www.journey4josh.com. Patty Proutey also welcomes hearing stories about Josh from anyone who knew him. Jester's Café, at 607 Castle Street, is open for breakfast and lunch Tuesday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and for weekend brunch on Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call (910) 763-6555 or visit www.jesterscafe.com.

*Dana Sachs' latest novel,* The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

# Reunion of the Heart

*In the most unexpected time and place, a saved life and tears of gratitude*




By Gwenyfar Rohler

I am in love with a workaholic. The last time we tried to go on vacation together, I thought I might have to hospitalize him for withdrawal symptoms. In four days, he fixed the leaky faucet in our hotel room's bathroom, re-hung the bathroom door and fixed the squeaky hinge. I should have been wary when the Love of My Life, Jock Brandis, suggested Washington, D.C., for a trip. His pitch went something like this: "You love art museums and theater, the Smithsonian is free, and between the Folger, the Kennedy Center and the National, we should be able to see four shows in a weekend."

After I was on board with the plan and had made ticket reservations on the Kennedy Center's website, he let it slip that he had also scheduled meetings with Peace Corps, USAID and some obscure peanut-related nonprofit — because we were going all that way, so why waste an opportunity?

Jock is an inventor and the founder of the Full Belly Project, a humanitarian nonprofit. His most well-known invention is the Universal Nut Sheller, a bell-shaped machine made out of concrete and metal which, at $28, is considered to be the Holy Grail of sustainable agriculture in the Third World. I am a fairly healthy young woman of about five-foot-seven. I can lift a Sheller, but carrying it any distance is definitely a two-person job. By day two of this escapade, we had perfected the fine art of maneuvering the Washington Metro with one. The key was to leave an hour earlier than would otherwise be necessary, and to utilize the moving armrests of escalators to do most of the long-distance work.

I am extremely proud of Jock and his work.

But carrying the Sheller through the Metro system really pushed the limits of my affection.

Peace Corps uses several of Jock's inventions, as does USAID, and he talks with both organizations frequently by phone. Still, few people in the head offices had seen a Sheller in person, and he felt it was important for them to have a tactile experience with one.

On the day of the Peace Corps meeting I helped him carry the Sheller as far as the lobby of the office building, but once he was in line to talk with security, I abandoned him to go visit the bookstore down the street — this was supposed to be *vacation*. The security guard spotted Jock and followed his progression through the lobby the moment we came through the door. It had been a relatively calm and normal morning up to this point, and the poor guard must have been thinking, 'Why on *my* shift does this guy have to show up with this crazy thing?' In a post-9/11 world, this was a red flag if ever there was one.

Jock dug the piece of paper out of his pocket with the time and the name of his appointment and handed it over to the guard, who eyed the machine warily. Taking the questioning glances as a cue, Jock launched into an explanation of how the Sheller works and what he does. Then, in the middle of the conversation, he decided to take a sharp left-hand turn:

"So, are you Igbo?" he asked the security guard.

"Excuse me?" the guard responded.

"Are you Igbo? You look Igbo."

"How did you know?" The guard asked, completely shocked that a six-foot-something white guy would ask him this in D.C.

"I was in Biafra, and you look Igbo." Jock answered, matter-of-factly.

Now, "You look Igbo" might sound like a racist and provocative statement coming from your average blue-eyed white male. The Igbo are a tribe in Nigeria that broke away from the country to form the short-lived nation state of Biafra from 1967–1970. The Biafran Civil Conflict was notable in modern African history because Nigeria was already a sovereign nation that had established independence from its colonial power. Therefore, the Igbo of Biafra were trying to se-

cede from an African nation, not from colonial rule. But Nigeria's major export is oil. The Nigerian government wasn't going to let the Igbo go without a fight and risk losing control of their major export. The world powers were not going to endanger their oil reserves by recognizing the fledgling nation. The result was horrific civil war, starvation and a scorched earth campaign by the victors.

"*You* were in Biafra?" the guard asked him. Tall, Canadian white guys were not typical players in African civil wars.

"Yeah, I was with Can-air relief."

"What did you do in Biafra? Were you a mercenary?"

"No, I was on the Can-air relief plane that flew food and medical supplies into the combat zone at night and evacuated children to São Tomé."

The call came down from upstairs that they were ready for Jock, and he headed for the elevator.

Meanwhile, down the street, I had just found two James Baldwin first editions and was over the moon with excitement. Jock's meeting went well, everyone was suitably impressed with his machine and eager to see more of his inventions. Thankfully, he left the Sheller with them, so we wouldn't have to take it back to our hotel by way of the Metro.

When Jock came out of the elevator the guard was waiting for him — and shaking. "I thought he was going to take a swing at me," Jock recounted to me later. "He was actually vibrating he was so upset."

He stopped Jock in the lobby and asked again, "Were you really in Biafra?"

Jock nodded, "I was."

"You really flew on the plane with the children?"

Jock nodded again and looked at his hands, like he always does when he talks about this. "Yes," he answered. "I had children die in my arms . . . and I had nightmares for years." The guard stared at him, confusion written across his face. "I'm still wanted for air piracy in Nigeria," Jock offered. "I left under a hail of gunfire and I haven't been back. But I can still see that plane full of children every night, trying to get that old Super Constellation off the ground before dawn and across the water to São Tomé."

In an effort to get the world press to acknowledge what was happening in Biafra, several aid organizations were evacuating children who were dying of starvation to a small island known as São Tomé, a Portuguese-owned prison colony off the coast of Nigeria. There they would be given food and medical care with promises to be reunited with their parents — if their parents survived the war. For members of the world press, the pictures and stories of children with bloated stomachs and skin hanging limply from their bones were more heart-rending than any statistics about the battles could ever be.

"I was one of those children," the guard finally whispered. Tears streamed from his eyes, and he held out his hand, "I have to thank you. My family would have starved and I would have died. You saved our lives."

Jock is a guy of the Clint Eastwood school of macho: He doesn't cry. In twelve years together I can't name three occasions I've seen him shed tears. But on a perfectly normal Friday morning, he found himself crying uncontrollably and hugging a security guard in the lobby of an office building in Washington, D.C. The child had grown up and his family lived, he had come to the U.S. and gotten a good job and was sending money home. He asked Jock for some information about the Shellers, and they embraced again. Jock walked out into the crisp March air and took several deep breaths to try to calm his pulse.

But I knew none of this. I only knew that, an hour earlier, I had left Jock in a perfectly happy state in the lobby of the Peace Corps office. In about the same amount of time it takes to mix concrete and grease a set of Sheller molds, he had fallen apart. When he found me in the bookstore he was blubbering, cheeks wet with tears, eyes swollen and red.

I dropped the book I was holding. "My God! What could Peace Corps have said that upset you this much?"

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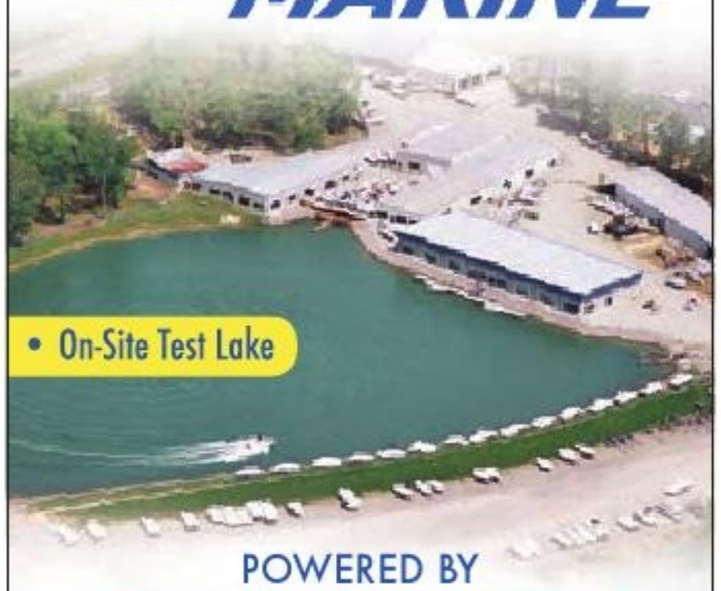


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# Thank the Fish

*Roland and Alma made their living from the sea. Theirs is a love story*

By John Justice

**Roland was a fisherman** and Alma was a fisherman's wife.

Many mornings, their breakfast was fried spot and grits.

Their evening meal was what Roland caught from his little wooden boat earlier in the day. And he caught it all — fish, shrimp, oysters, crabs, clams. From the for-free waters of New Hanover County, they got meals that would set you back $25, $30 these days.

Alma and Roland and their kids ate like primitive foodies because they had precious little cash and the tasty fish and shellfish were there for the taking.

You could see them — this was in the late 1950s — in their little house near where the old "babies' hospital" was on Wrightsville Avenue. You could toss a clamshell from the house and hit the drawbridge over the Intracoastal Waterway.

They had a good vantage point: sun bouncing off the waters. Bridge rising to accommodate the high-masted boats heading to Florida or New York, depending on the season. The thick green of marsh grasses, the pleasant houses lined up on Wrightsville Beach.

But time was money and money was scarce, and they didn't tarry to bask in the view laid out below them. They worked. Roland made and repaired fishermen's nets. Together they ran their mom-and-pop seafood operation. They'd sell winter oysters for $2 a bushel in the shell. They got $1 per quart of oysters they'd steam open, shuck, and pack in little white round containers they bought from Jacobi Hardware.

Roland was resourceful, but not always reliable. During one of his roving spells, he'd come home swearing he'd been fishing when all the signs were that he'd been roistering out on Shell Island at the Sugar Shack.

Then came a [brief] time when Roland eased up on the bottle and started cooking feasts for them every night. "Never just one thing," Alma said. Always a splendid array of crabs, shrimp, clams, fish and oysters. He created a deviled crab mix said to be world-class. He brewed homemade beer.

They worked hard. There were squabbles. But they stayed together and together they were the day Roland crashed his son's VW, which caught fire and gave Roland fatal third-degree burns over 90 percent of his body.

Alma wasn't a complainer and didn't whine when life roughed her up and only slowly smoothed her over. She did ask herself: "What next?" And because she had no one who could answer, she answered herself: "Well, life goes on."

It's something to think about, the mostly invisible lives people live all around us — the work they do to have a place on this Earth. Alma and Roland and their time and labor to transform all those crabs, oysters, shrimp, clams and fish into food for them and their family and for others too.

I was eating dinner with an inland friend. She and I both ordered the fish. Before she picked up her fork, she bowed her head and said: "Thank the fish." And so we did.

Thank the fish, thank the fishermen and fisherwomen who put them on our tables.

P.S. Alma wrote a fine book about all this. It's called *Memories of a Fisherman's Wife*, published by Dram Tree Books. It's good; check it out.

*John Justice is a writer and artist living in Chapel Hill.*

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# Love at First Bite

*Discovering the love of a long-lost father made me want to cook*

By Jennifer Chapis

**It was 1993,** and I was tired of Triscuits for dinner.

My college boyfriend, Ben, was showing me how to make a macaroni concoction called American chop suey. "You just mix it all together, couldn't be easier." He held his hand over mine as we stirred tomato sauce, mozzarella and ground beef in a pot the size of a kettle drum. "We can eat off this all week," he said.

*Yes*, I thought. *Forever.*

I didn't know I had a desire to be taken care of. I simply thought that's what men did. After Ben, there was Lance, a sexy skier who left home-cooked stroganoff outside my front door while I was studying for finals. "To nourish that beautiful brain of yours," he wrote in the attached card. It felt like Christmas morning as, one by one, I lifted the Tupperware lids: buttery egg noodles, arugula and avocado salad, coconut cake. With each new dish, my heart melted just a bit.

I didn't deliberately choose men who liked to roast, braise and blanch, yet the sautéing sweetheart was definitely an unconscious pattern of mine. Whether it was the biologist-slash-bartender who caught his own clams in the Ocracoke Harbor, or the photojournalist-slash-waiter whose idea of excitement was to bake loaves of sourdough, I seemed to gravitate toward pseudo-chefs who worked in restaurants and lived in my kitchen.

As the product of an absentee father known for his cooking, it's no wonder I lusted after men who wanted to feed me. "No one grills venison like *he* could," Mom would say with an uncharacteristic nostalgia. Though he had disappointed her in other ways, his culinary skills were beyond reproach. He left when I was too young to remember.

My mother, on the other hand, did not share his zest for standing over a stovetop. Although our cabinets were stocked with healthy options, she seemed pained to have to cook anything — perhaps because handling food reminded her of *him*.

"What's for dinner?" I'd ask.

"It's every man for himself tonight," she'd say, as if that were the dish she was serving.

I longed to be like Jane Jetson, the futuristic cartoon character, who pressed a button and lasagna appeared. As a child, I foraged the freezer for boil-in-the-bag soup. As a young adult, I slurped cereal for supper. I bought fresh vegetables and either ate them raw or let them rot while I went out for falafel. Like my mother, my mantra was, "I'd rather starve than cook."

I eventually married a vegetarian foodie who showed up on our first date with groceries and a sack full of pots and pans. A hilarious author, even his fictional characters were obsessed with cooking. Sadly, however, Josh preferred writing to other kinds of communication. We went to coffee shops together but sat at separate tables with our laptops. All my life, I'd chosen emotionally unavailable men who loved me but weren't present when I needed them. Josh cooked for me nearly every night for twelve years, but I didn't know how to ask for the care I really needed.

After we split up, I couldn't open the kitchen cabinets without crying. Jars of sun-dried tomatoes and kalamata tapenade reminded me that I was alone. No one would notice if I accidentally skipped dinner. Little by little, I ate the homemade strawberry butter that we bought together at Eagle Island Fruit and Seafood, dreading the day it would run out. Two years later, the aged pomegranate balsamic and marinated artichoke hearts in the jar with gold ribbon were still waiting to be eaten. I couldn't bring myself to finish off the evidence of his love.

Thirty years went by before I was reintroduced to my biological father. For our reunion, he seared venison steaks and boiled sap from his own maple trees to make syrup for pancakes. Even the tastily seasoned croutons atop his garden-grown salad were freshly toasted. He fed my sister and me all day.

Eventually, I divulged my trillion-dollar question: *Why did you leave us?*

"I knew you'd be better off without me," he said, shamefully but without hesitation.

I watched him whisk citrus vinaigrette and knew he was telling the truth. Staring back at me was the abused child he once was. He had protected me by going away.

Somehow, learning that my father loved me made me want to cook. Deep sadness surfaced as I realized I associated cooking with caring, yet I didn't cook for myself. That Thanksgiving, I watched my uncle brush egg wash onto a cheese wheel, and I longed to learn. I went home and baked my own stuffed brie. I photographed the soft white goo oozing with glistening pear slices. I almost sent the photo to my ex-husband because I knew he'd be proud of me. Instead, I savored the deliciousness alone. And felt nourished.

*Jennifer Chapis is an energy healer who leads Writing for Healing workshops in Wilmington. Find her at www.allovehealing.com.*

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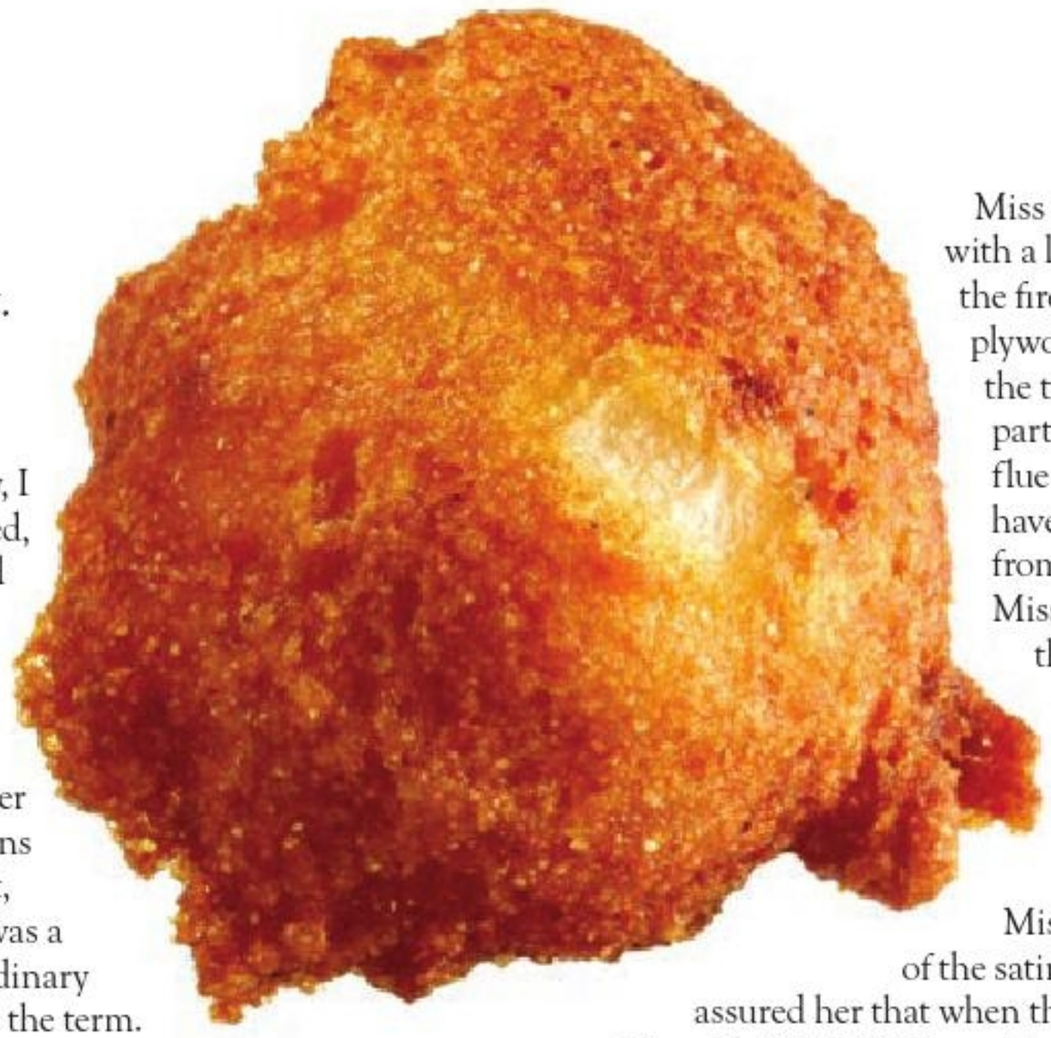
# Miss Hazel's Hushpuppies

*Afternoon tea and conversation with a true Southern lady*



By Bill Thompson

*I am a part of all that I have met.*
– Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Over the last three-quarters of a century, I have met a lot of people and they are, indeed, a part of me. I have been fortunate to travel to some distant places where some of the folks I met could be called "exotic." But some of the most memorable people were right here at home.

I have written about Miss Hazel in other publications, particularly those publications that have to do with the South, or, at least, our perception of the South. Miss Hazel was a Southern lady. She didn't fit any of the ordinary stereotypes that folks often associate with the term. She was unique.

She was a very proud lady, but she had the kind of gentility that put those around her at ease. At the same time, she had a certain toughness about her that allowed her to rise above what could have been depressing circumstances.

Back in the early 1950s, my family owned a small oil distributorship. Most of our business was providing fuel to farmers in the summer to fire their tobacco curers, and in the winter we provided home heating oil, either kerosene or fuel oil. Miss Hazel was one of our winter customers.

She lived in a big, two-story house that, at one time, had been a real showplace. It was kept up nicely, but it had deteriorated some since its heyday back in the '20s. The Great Depression had adversely affected her family's finances, and her husband became a salesman for a produce company. Shortly after World War II, her husband died. Miss Hazel never held what she called a "public job." Her sole source of revenue came from her role as a substitute English teacher. She was also very frugal.

Even in her diminished financial situation, Miss Hazel never lost her sense of "respectability" – the dignity of her place in society – while still maintaining her ability to make everyone she met feel as if they were the most important person in her life at that particular time.

Each fall Miss Hazel would call the oil plant and remind us it was time to fill her oil tank. I was usually the one to make the delivery, and almost always there would be some small maintenance of her heating equipment involved. One particular visit clings to memory.

Miss Hazel had a very elegant dining room with a large fireplace at one end. She had covered the fireplace opening with a sheet of unpainted plywood with a hole cut in it to accommodate the tin flue of a free-standing oil heater. On that particular delivery day, she wanted me to fit the flue through the wooden cover. I told her I'd have to put a blue collar on it to keep the wood from touching the hot flue. This did not fit into Miss Hazel's aesthetic ideals. She had painted the flue and the wood a dark blue, so now she instructed me to paint the collar dark blue, which I did.

I filled the fuel tank, installed the flue and collar, and painted them both a royal blue. That was not the exact shade of blue Miss Hazel wanted; it did not match the blue of the satin upholstery of the dining room chairs. I assured her that when the paint dried, it would match.

She said, "Well, William, it is tea time anyway, so why don't we have a bit of tea while we wait for the paint to dry?"

I was standing there with oil and soot all over me, but I knew better than to spurn Miss Hazel's invitation. So I washed up, and in just a few minutes she returned with a silver tray and two glasses of iced tea. "Now, William, I have some chocolate cookies or some of those little crackers if you would like, but just between you and me, why don't we have just a bit of the hushpuppies that I bought yesterday?"

So we did. Miss Hazel and I sat there for quite a while talking about my plans for college. We talked about Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman and Thoreau. Then we talked of "The War," an interchangeable term for the "War of Northern Aggression," and World Wars I and II. She talked about her father, who had fought in the Confederate Army and had come back home to build up the farm. She talked of the other wars and how they had changed her life.

When we finished our hushpuppies, she noted that the stovepipe needed another coat of paint. I applied it and she was satisfied. Looking back on that afternoon with Miss Hazel, I now realize that graciousness is not restrained by finances.

Miss Hazel moved from the old house some time ago and has since died. The building eventually fell into ruin. I've had a lot of hushpuppies in my lifetime, but they've never been quite the same.

*Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.*

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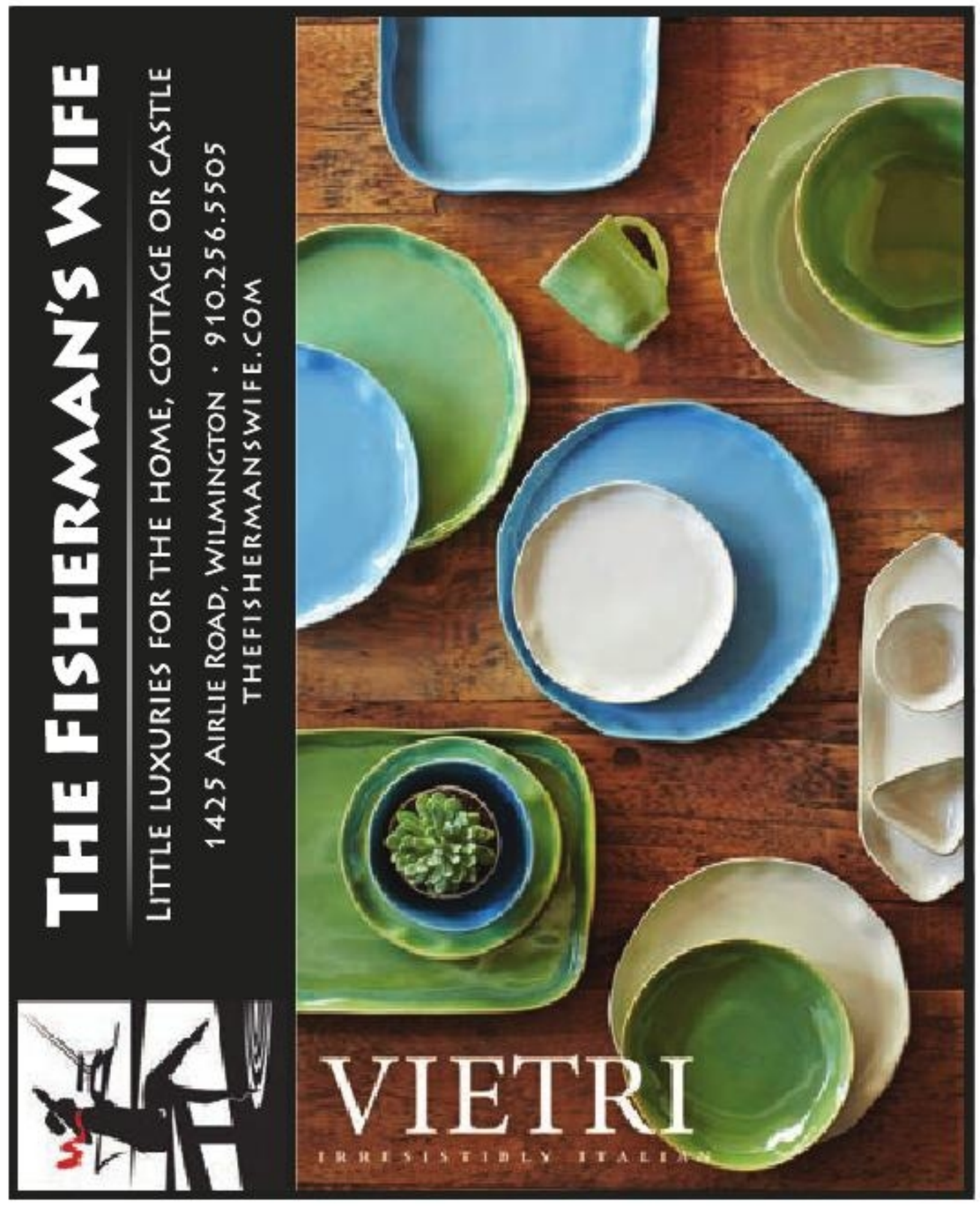


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# Anhinga

*The mysterious snake bird of our freshwater swamps*

By Susan Campbell

**Snake-bird?** Water-turkey? These names conjure up images of a very odd-looking bird. Whether in the air or in the water, the anhinga is indeed one of the more unique birds that call North Carolina's southeastern coastal plain home. A relative of pelicans and cormorants, this long-necked, web-footed bird is very much at home in our freshwater swamps, rivers and canals.

The species' name originates from South America, where these birds are common year-round. Anhinga comes from the Tupi Indian word for "snake-bird." Since anhingas often swim with only their head and neck exposed, indeed these stealthy birds can appear very snake-like. They are believed to stalk prey underwater among roots and vegetation. They swim with their necks folded and use their long, pointed bills to stab fish with a sideways blow. When anhingas rise to the surface, impaled prey items are expertly flipped and swallowed whole.

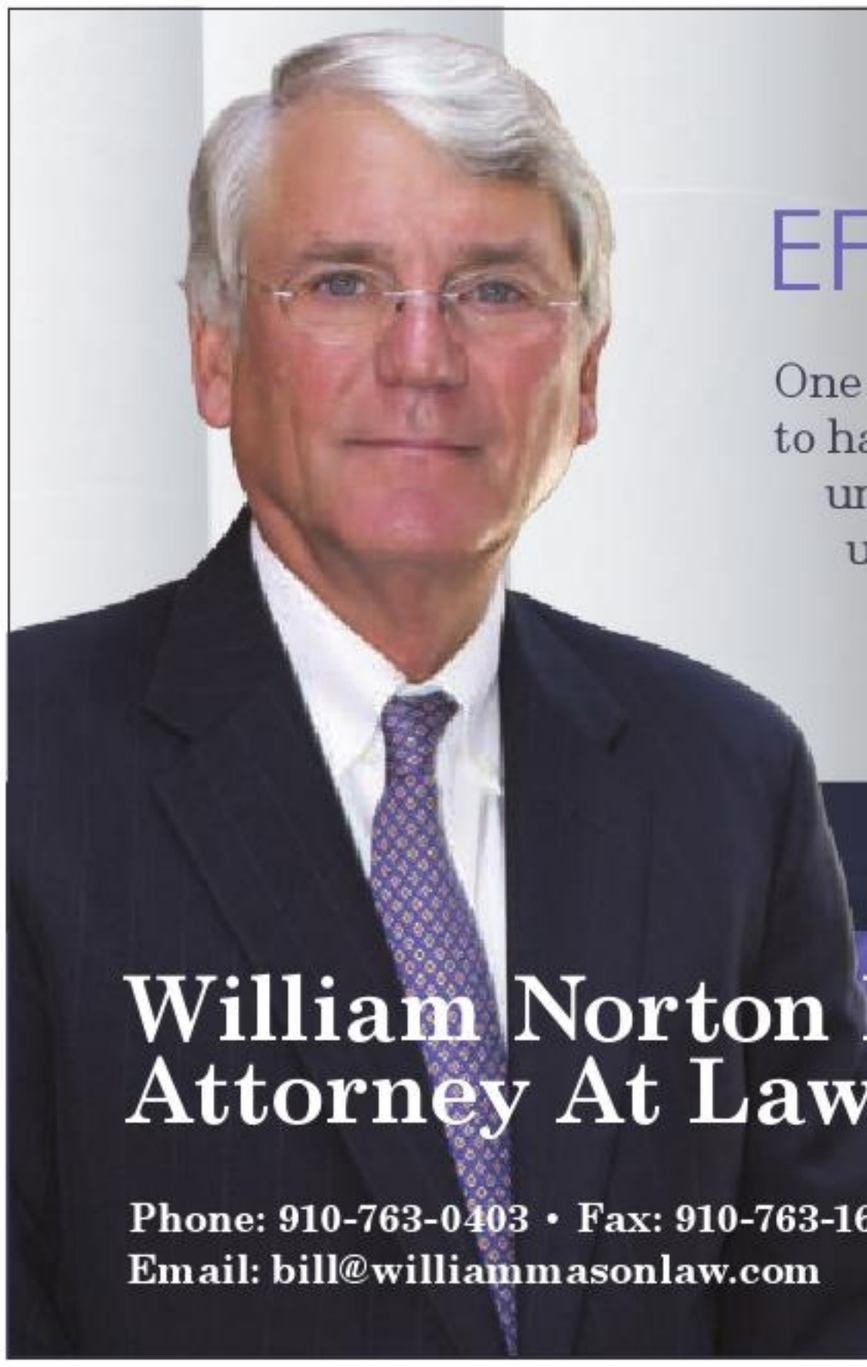
Unlike their close cousins, the cormorants, anhingas have longer wings with large silvery patches in all plumages. Adult males are all-black with beautiful, long pale plumes along their backs during the breeding season. Females and immature birds are more subdued, with brown heads and necks that blend in well with their surroundings. Anhingas can easily be overlooked as they spend a lot of time sitting motionless. However, if one gets too close, the birds will vocalize using a raspy grunt as a warning.

In the air, these sizable birds will catch thermals and soar, not unlike vultures, but with their long tails and necks outstretched, they look like flying crosses. They're also known to "hang themselves out to dry" following foraging bouts. Unlike ducks and geese, anhinga plumage is not waterproof. Being permeable makes fishing in deep water less work, but it also means they must regularly perch and stretch out their wings to dry their feathers.

Here along our coast, anhingas begin nesting in early spring. They usually nest colonially, either with other anhingas or with wading birds such as herons or egrets. Nests are large, stick-built affairs in mature cypress or other trees in or adjacent to water. Both male and female incubate and tend to young. Nestlings immediately develop a thick layer of brown downy feathers and grow quickly. Should they fall into the water or be deserted by their parents, they are capable swimmers and hunters the moment they hit the water.

The anhinga was one of a suite of species that benefitted from the rapidly growing beaver population late in the nineteenth century. Their range expanded westward and northward here in North Carolina as more habitat was created. This is not surprising, since these birds prefer wet areas with relatively shallow water as well as plenty of perches and larger trees for roosting and nest sites. Man-made impoundments in the Coastal Plain in more recent years have provided even more opportunities for finding these interesting waterbirds.

*Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted by email at susan@ncaves.com.*



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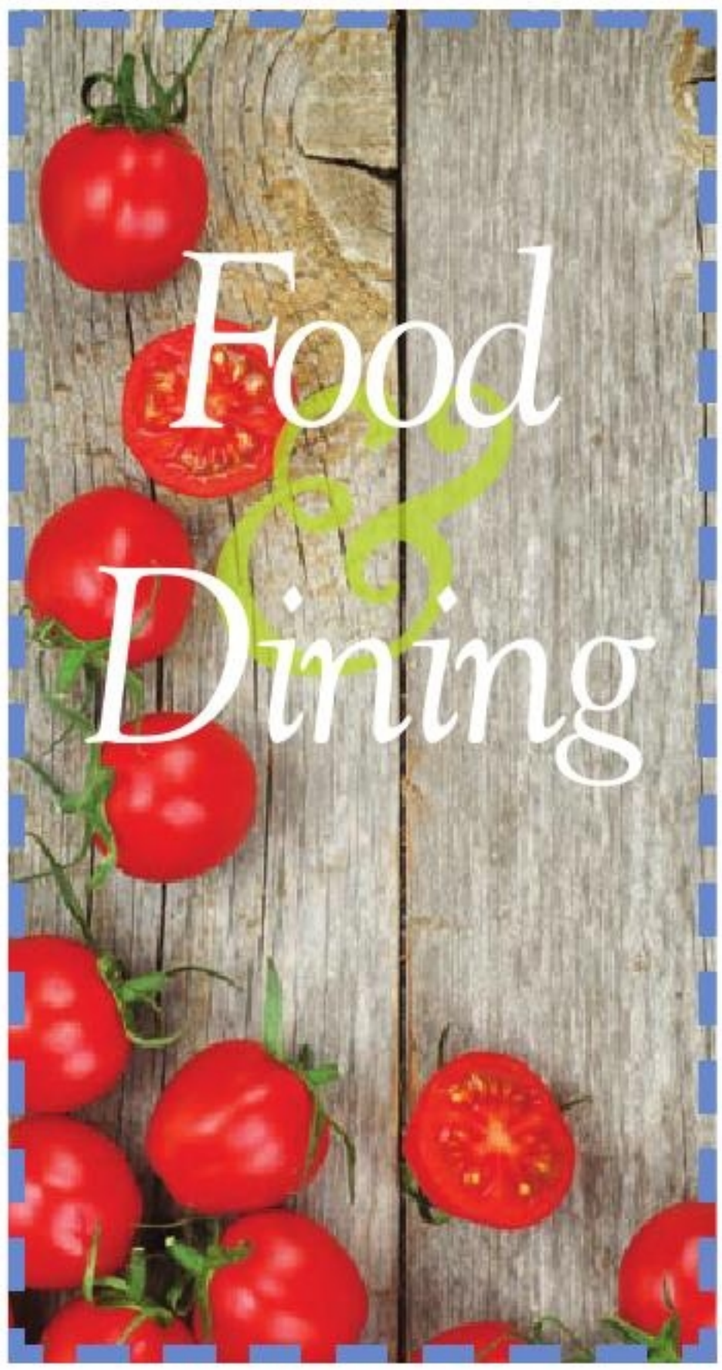

# The All-Stars Cometh — Again

*This time, with a new father's hand, the Big O just can't refuse me*

By Wiley Cash

**On February 10, 1991,** while Patriot missiles intercepted Scuds over the desert in Kuwait, I sat mid-court at the NBA All-Star Game in Charlotte, North Carolina. My buddy's father worked at one of the downtown hotel chains, and that morning I learned some heart-stopping news: A hotel executive had a few extra tickets, and he'd given them to my friend's father.

Operation Desert Storm, which had begun twenty-five days earlier, was in full swing. It was my generation's first of many experiences with war in the Middle East, although it would be another decade before words like "terrorism" and "religious extremism" would become part of our cultural lexicon. On that afternoon in 1991, the only sign that the United States was at war were the metal detectors everyone was required to pass through before gaining entrance to the Charlotte Coliseum, home of the Hornets. If you'd never been to a basketball game at "The Hive," perhaps you wouldn't have thought anything of being asked to empty your pockets before being waved through the doors, but I'd been to several Hornets games, and the presence of metal detectors wasn't the only noticeable difference. There was a palpable energy that made the game distinct from any sporting event I've ever attended; "magical" is the only word I can use to describe it.

There have been many golden eras in American professional basketball, but I would argue there has never been a moment where more possibility was both promised and delivered upon than during the 1990–1991 NBA season. To look at the roster of the 1991 All-Star Game is to see 83 percent of the Dream Team that would dazzle the world at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, a team many consider to be the greatest sports team ever assembled: On the East were Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, Charles Barkley, and Patrick Ewing; on the West were Magic Johnson, Chris Mullin, Karl Malone, Clyde Drexler, David Robinson and John Stockton. A few notable players who were also on the 1991 All-Star roster: Isiah Thomas, Dominique Wilkins, Kevin McHale, Robert Parish and James Worthy. To put this in perspective, twelve of the twenty-six players in Charlotte that day were named to the NBA's 50th Anniversary Team in 1996, meaning they were considered among the fifty greatest to ever play the game.

The 1991 All-Star Game also marked defining moments in three legendary NBA careers. In June, Michael Jordan's Bulls would beat the Lakers to win the first of six championships that would single-out Jordan as the most prominent athlete of that decade and the next. In November, Magic Johnson, whose Showtime Lakers had signified both the style and excess of the 1980s, would hold a press conference to announce that he'd contracted HIV. An injury-addled Larry Bird, who'd long been Magic's rival and had recently become his dear friend, would retire at the end of the season before reluctantly joining the Dream Team that summer.

I understood the power of the celebrity on the floor, but it hadn't yet dawned on me that it would also attract celebrity to the game, at least "celebrity" as the term is understood by 13-year-old boys. In the middle of the first quarter, a Michael Jordan dunk brought the local crowd to its feet, and I immediately recognized a distinct voice intermingled with the cheers. I looked down my row and spotted Ed Lover from *Yo! MTV Raps*, and I did what all star-struck boys would do in that situation: I took my game program down to Mr. Lover and asked him to sign it, and then I took a moment and looked around me and wished I hadn't spotted him.

A few months earlier I'd taped an HBO documentary called *History of the NBA*, and the more I scanned the crowd the more I realized I was in the company of the very history I'd memorized after watching the tape a couple dozen times. Seated behind Ed Lover was Houston Rockets great Calvin Murphy, who at 5'9" is the shortest player ever to be inducted into the NBA Hall of Fame. I asked him to sign my program, and he happily obliged. After that, I couldn't stop scanning the stands and approaching NBA icons for autographs: legendary Celtics John Havlicek, Bill Russell and Bob Cousy; Bob Pettit, the only player aside from Kobe Bryant (who was 12 at the time) to be named MVP of four All-Star games; Dave Cowens, one of the shortest centers in NBA history and a man who'd go on to coach the Hornets for three seasons beginning in 1996; and many others.

And then I looked across the coliseum and saw the man whose signature would become my Holy Grail: Oscar Robertson. I approached the notoriously prickly "Big O" with my hands shaking, my pen and the game program trembling as if the wind was attempting to blow them from my hands, and I asked if he'd give me his signature. His response? "Get out of the way, kid. I'm trying to watch the game."

As the 2014–2015 All-Star Weekend draws closer, Charlotte is looking forward to 2017 with the hopes that the city will be awarded its second All-Star Game. League Commissioner Adam Silver has stated with certainty that Charlotte will once again host the NBA's big weekend; it's just a matter of when.

Like the city of Charlotte, I'll spend the next two years looking forward to the 2017 All-Star Weekend. I plan to dust off my 1991 game program, stand in line to pass through the metal detectors, and, once inside, scan the stands for "Big O." The only difference is that I won't be the same nervous, pimply-faced 13-year-old boy. I'll be a nervous, bearded 39-year-old man. But I'll have my 2-year-old daughter there to back me up, and Mr. Robertson, I doubt you'll be able to tell us both *no.*

*Wiley Cash is a* New York Times *best-selling author whose second novel,* This Dark Road to Mercy, *was released last year. He lives in Wilmington.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW D. BERNSTEIN

# First in Flight

*Life can be tough for an injured bird of prey. Fortunately, Dr. Joni Gnyp at the Cape Fear Raptor Center is always on call*

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY
VIRGINIA HOLMAN

Imagine for a moment that you're a red-tailed hawk whose tail feathers are blown away by a shotgun blast. Or perhaps you're a tiny, fluffy, impossibly soft screech owl out for dinner at dusk when you thwack into a windshield. Maybe you're a dorky-looking, dump-dwelling turkey vulture perched on a methane burner when it fires up unexpectedly. Now, to add injury to insult, you have charbroiled feathers. Life's tough for a bird of prey. A few of the wounded are fortunate to wind up in the capable hands of veterinarian Dr. Joni Gnyp at the Cape Fear Raptor Center.

We're lucky in coastal North Carolina to have a wide variety of expert wildlife rehabilitators. If you find an injured sea turtle, call the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center. An injured fawn? Call the Coastal Carolina Wildlife Rehab. If you find any injured migratory bird, the skilled rehabilitators at Sea Biscuit Wildlife Shelter and Skywatch Bird Rescue have you covered. Now, coastal North Carolina has a center dedicated solely to the medical treatment, rehabilitation and release of raptors.

"Call me Dr. Joni," she says when we first meet at the Rocky Point Animal Hospital. The bungalow-style clinic is much like Dr. Joni herself: welcoming, tidy and immaculate, which is saying something when your business is caring for animals that shed, bite, scratch, drool or bleed the whole day long. The lobby is hung with photos of military service dogs on the job with soldiers and airmen. Though Cape Fear Raptor Center is a separate nonprofit entity, for now its facilities are shared with the clinic.

Dr. Joni ushers me through the treatment clinic for a tour of the outdoor raptor mews. I pass a countertop arrayed with meticulously labeled paper dishes – the same cornered kind you'd get at an old-school hamburger stand. Each one has a bird's name and the weight of the food in grams. It looks a bit like the lineup in a short-order kitchen if you can get past the ick factor. Among other delicacies, I see that Pip and Squeak, the screech owls, will dine on tiny white hamsters, while Andy the horned owl will feast on an order of sliced rat.

As we stroll the mews, Dr. Joni introduces me to each bird. There's a shy osprey hunkered down in a nesting box. A turkey vulture seems fairly indifferent to my presence and stares at me with an almost human level of disregard. A yellow-eyed great horned owl lurks in the shadows at the back of his stall and violently clacks his beak at our approach. When he's in my sight, he raises his wings and assumes a defensive posture. I back away quickly.

"His primary feathers are injured," Dr. Joni says, "damaged by buckshot. He can still fly, but not soundlessly, so he can't hunt successfully. When he molts, he'll grow new flight feathers." And what of the birds who can't be returned to the wild? "Well, we can make some birds education birds if they have the right personality, and we take them to school and community events. But these are wild creatures, and a captive bird has a life sentence. I take the decision to turn an unreturnable bird into a service animal seriously. An education bird has a job, and he needs to enjoy it to endure captivity."

Then we arrive at the cage of an enormous juvenile female bald eagle she calls Yangchen. As she handles Yangchen, she tells me that she came to provide veterinary care for raptors unexpectedly.

"When we first opened the practice in 2006, we had a hawk come in that had been shot and had a broken wing. And my husband told me I should treat the bird." Dr. Joni and her husband, Martin Gnyp, are both skilled falconers. "So I decided to give it a try. I spoke with specialists and then, using my own surgical knowledge, I successfully repaired the fractured wing." Then she was dismayed to discover that she couldn't continue to care for the hawk. Since all migratory birds are federally protected, she had to surrender the hawk to a certified wildlife rehabber within twenty-four hours. "As a vet, I wanted to be the one to monitor the hawk's recovery. So I decided I would apply for my rehab permit." Before Dr.

Joni opened her doors, almost all the seriously injured raptors had to receive veterinary care at the Carolina Raptor Center near Charlotte. When the director of that program said that the state needed a raptor center in the southeastern part of North Carolina, "the idea for Cape Fear Raptor Center took wing."

What Dr. Joni is capable of doing for these injured birds is remarkable. She can even attach new feathers to a bird whose feathers have been damaged, a process known as imping. She has a freezer full of extra feathers she's harvested from molting birds and carcasses for just this purpose — and they have come in handy. "I've imped an entire red-shouldered hawk tail train." Once a bird is imped, it is often returned to the wild within twenty-four hours. When the bird goes through its molt, the imped feathers are shed as new ones grow in. "We have a turkey vulture whose feathers were completely destroyed by a methane burner. I could have imped the entire bird in an hour." Even so, she didn't think releasing a fully imped bird was a good idea. "So we're just waiting for him to go through his molt, and then we'll return him to the wild." And she tells me that for high-strung birds like ospreys, which routinely refuse to eat in captivity, she has had great success using operant conditioning to get them to accept food.

Many raptors arrive collapsed and listless. These birds often have heavy metal poisoning from feeding on carcasses with lead shot or from swallowing lead fishing weights. Dr. Joni treats birds suspected of heavy metal toxicity by administering medication that binds to the metal and is then excreted, a process known as chelation. "It's very effective, but also extremely expensive at $700 a dose." Yet those who find and bring in an injured bird pay nothing. That's because the Cape Fear Raptor Center is run solely through the generosity of the Rocky Point Animal Hospital, its volunteers, and donations to the nonprofit.

In 2014, Dr. Joni treated close to 350 raptors, all on a shoestring budget of about $20,000 and innumerable volunteer hours. In order to treat more wounded raptors, she hopes the center can receive enough funding to hire a couple of full-time staff members, a development director, and erect a freestanding facility and public education center separate from her veterinary clinic. Right now, she relies on a backbone of stalwart volunteers like Woody Vinson and Anne Francione, who dedicate many hours each week to feeding, medicating and assisting in the rehabilitation of these wild creatures.

When Yangchen the eagle was found in Topsail Beach last October, she was limp and unable to fly. "She couldn't even raise her head." Even though she tested negative for lead poisoning, Dr. Joni chelated her anyway, suspecting another heavy metal might be to blame, and the bird began to recover. The source of Yangchen's illness remains a mystery. Another eagle, Aang, displayed similar symptoms last summer, and after treatment and release, failed to thrive. Aang was fitted with a GPS unit, so Dr. Joni and Woody Vinson were able to locate and retrieve the eagle, but he perished suddenly. Dr. Joni is still trying to discover the source of both eagles' illnesses.

As Yangchen has improved, Dr. Joni and Woody Vinson have worked diligently to ready the bird to return to the wild. To that end, they exercise her three times a week on a 300-foot line called a creance. This lightweight tether creates drag, and the eagle grows stronger from the resistance.

I'm fortunate to visit the center when Dr. Joni and Woody are holding a creance session for Yangchen. For a wild creature with a fierce, sharp bill and mighty talons, the eagle seems downright docile. Woody explains that this is due the small leather falconry hood that covers Yangchen's eyes as he transports her to the exercise area, a fallow soybean field across the road from the clinic.

Birds are notoriously lightweight creatures. Even a bird as large as a pelican weighs less than three pounds, yet this young eagle is such a large and powerful bird it weighs slightly over ten pounds. Her talons are fearsome yellow claws nearly the size of my hand; her beak looks capable of biting off my nose in a single snap. Unhooded and perched on the long leather-gloved arm of the falconer, she can gaze directly into his eye — Yangchen is nearly three feet tall. Dr. Joni tells me that when fully extended in flight, this eagle has a seven-foot wingspan. I ponder that: a bird with a wingspan that rivals the height of an NBA player. When an eagle soars in a clear blue sky, it's impossible to understand its massive size. Up close, it's a different experience. Dr. Joni holds Yangchen above her head, and the eagle opens her wings in a display that makes me reflexively dip my head, as if I'm prey.

Yangchen is antsy, ready to fly. She steps from side to side, rustles her wings, and squawks loudly. Despite having this powerful bird mere inches from her face, Dr. Joni seems completely at ease and in control. She's an experienced falconer, and she and Yangchen clearly understand each other. Once Woody unspools about 300 feet of red creance line and secures it to a small swivel between the bird's feet, Dr. Joni launches the eagle. Yangchen flies low over the field, intent on reaching the distant tree line, but the drag on the line eventually causes her to flutter to the ground. Dr. Joni retrieves the bird by squatting down and extending her gloved arm near the eagle's breast. "It has to be her choice to climb on," she says. Yangchen looks toward the trees for a moment before she slowly steps on for another flight. By the time we're done, the eagle has launched eight times, and Dr. Joni's arm is fatigued from holding and tossing the ten-pound bird.

"She's ready for release; you can tell. We're just waiting on a solar-powered GPS unit, and then we'll send her off." The GPS unit is supplied by the North Carolina Museum of Natural Science, and Yangchen will wear it like a small backpack. Dr. Joni will then be able to track her on a site called movebank.org. "If she fails to thrive, I'll know and retrieve her for more treatment."

About two weeks later, I return to the Cape Fear Raptor Center for Yangchen's release. It's early on a frigid morning, so I expect only a few diehard bird lovers to be in attendance. When I arrive, the parking lot is over capacity, and cars line the road. A small gaggle of reporters and photographers jockey for position. Dr. Joni and Woody Vinson lead the crowd of about one-hundred people across the street. They remove Yangchen's small leather falconry hood and unfasten the leather anklets and small swivel that holds the creance. Yangchen squawks, looks at the crowd for a moment, and then Dr. Joni launches her for the last time. The eagle heads straight to the tree line, lands in a tall pine, and then, thanks to the good people at the Cape Fear Raptor Center, she soars out of sight.

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Want to follow Yangchen's travels? Visit www.movebank.org

Want to learn more about raptors? Attend one of Cape Fear Raptor Center's falconry sessions. All proceeds support the center.

The Cape Fear Raptor Center also visits schools and organizations to educate others about raptors. The center needs volunteers and donations. Information about falconry sessions, scheduling a visit to your school or community group, or voluntarism is available at www.capefearraptorcenter.com.

If you find a wounded raptor, read www.capefearraptorcenter.com/in-taking-bird-information to get information on how to capture and transport the bird. Then call the Cape Fear Raptor Center at (910) 602-6633.

*Author Virginia Holman teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington and occasionally guides with Kayak Carolina.*

# A WINNING LEGACY

To contribute, send your check payable to Greensboro College, with "Cunningham Endowment" in the memo line, to:

Greensboro College
Office of Institutional Advancement
815 W. Market St.
Greensboro, NC 27401

If you would like more information, please contact:

Michelle Davis, VP/Chief Advancement Officer
336-272-7102, ext. 5332
michelle.davis@greensboro.edu

GREENSBORO COLLEGE

www.greensboro.edu

Charles Decatur Cunningham Jr. loved golf.

Decatur began playing golf when he was 5 and played on the UNC golf team. He was a Greensboro Country Club champion. He won many Carolina Yarn Association golf tournaments. And he played golf until just weeks before he died Jan. 12 at the age of 88.

Decatur also loved Greensboro College.

He grew up just a hard 5-iron shot away from the campus. His grandmother, sister, aunt, and numerous other relatives attended there. He served on the college's Board of Visitors from 1995 to 2009, and he was honorary chairman of the college's 16th Annual Jim Locke Memorial Golf Tournament in 2005.

Now, Decatur's friends and family seek to honor his memory with a permanent endowment that encompasses those two great loves: the Charles Decatur Cunningham Jr. Golf Program Endowment at Greensboro College. Proceeds from the endowment will support the ongoing needs and activities of the college's golf program.

That program has shone not only on the course, with national titles for the men's team in 2000 and 2011, but also academically, with an academic national championship in 2013 and 15 All-America Scholars since 1965. Through this opportunity to contribute, you can help keep the program strong on and off the field while honoring a man who loved his sport and his community.

# March 2015

## Traditional Music

Not so much hunched as swollen
to the shape of his greatcoat, guitar
case in his fist, the busker paces
street lamp to shut shop door
wall to light, light to wall
the six feet – all he'll ever get –
of a cage he's made himself, a cage
he knows as well as the leopard and as little
what he is doing in it. Marchmont Street.
Midnight. Near Russell Square tube. Rain.
Every now and again he stoops,
plucks at the coinless pavement, paces.

I pass on the other side. Two years
I have paced between a dead man and a wall
I cannot break, making what music
I can. I gnaw myself
like any leopard. I have sharp teeth.
Tonight I try to remember old men
at Galax, at Fiddler's Grove:
how they lay their boards on the grass
a foot and a half square, how they clog,
flat-foot, stomp, and hoe-down,
how their arms flop like puppets
jigging the wind, how their apple-
doll faces hang grinning
year after year after year.

– *Ann Deagon*

# Half a Century Ago This Spring, America's Most Controversial War Began. For Many Who Honorably Served, It Still Hasn't Ended

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK STEELMAN · INTRO BY TRACY WILLIAMS

*The 1960s were a turbulent decade. The Vietnam War had divided the nation, and while the youth of America were encouraged to serve and protect the country – many felt it was their patriotic duty – their families often struggled to support the cause. "I didn't even know where Vietnam was on a map," says retired Army Sergeant Rich Hosier.*

*Boys returned home from the war as men, but they were often greeted with apathy – or worse. Blaine Love recalls being hassled by protesters. "They surrounded me . . . chanting that I was a 'baby-killer' among other things," he recalled. Others were spat upon or accused of being warmongers. Few were thanked for their sacrifices.*

*Next month, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Chapter 885, Lower Cape Fear Region, will honor all veterans of all wars during a four-day celebration in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. Here, we introduce you to a handful of local veterans, each with a story to tell, each with stories they will forever keep to themselves.*

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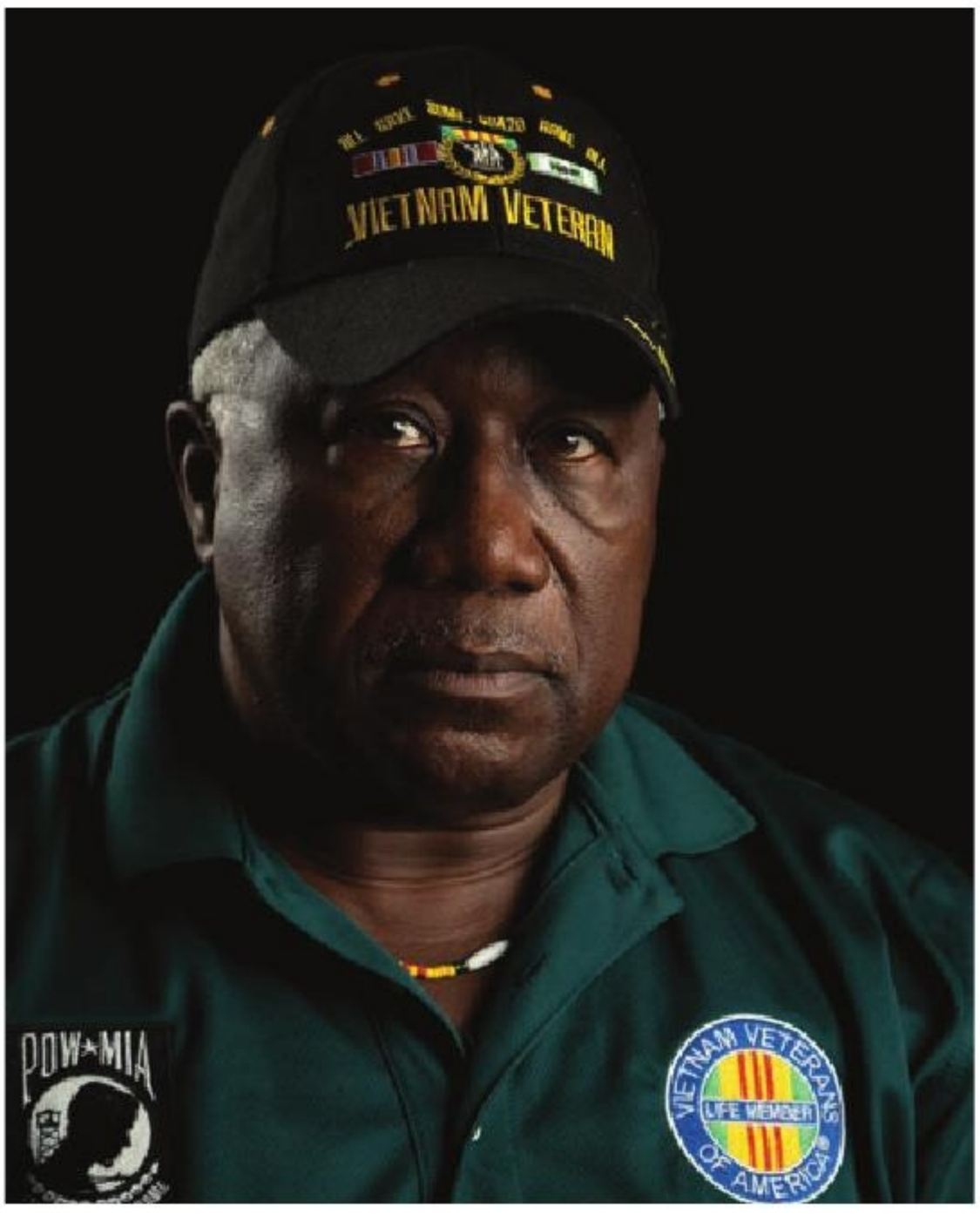
For more information on the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War celebration to be held Thursday, April 23, through Sunday, April 26, visit 50thcelebrationvietnamwar.org.

## Charlie Garner, Jr.

*"I remember the draft starting in the '60s while I was still in high school. There were demonstrations, school integrations, and President Kennedy got assassinated."*

**Dates in Vietnam: USS *Maddox* 1963–1967; MSTS/ MCO 1969–1971**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Navy**
**Rank during active duty: Chief Petty Officer**

Garner volunteered for duty at age 19 with four high school classmates. Some, he said, went into the Army, but he chose the Navy because he wanted to see the world. He was assigned to the USS *Maddox* in 1963, then in August of 1964, Garner and his shipmates were attacked in the South China seas, later known as the Gulf of Tonkin Incident.

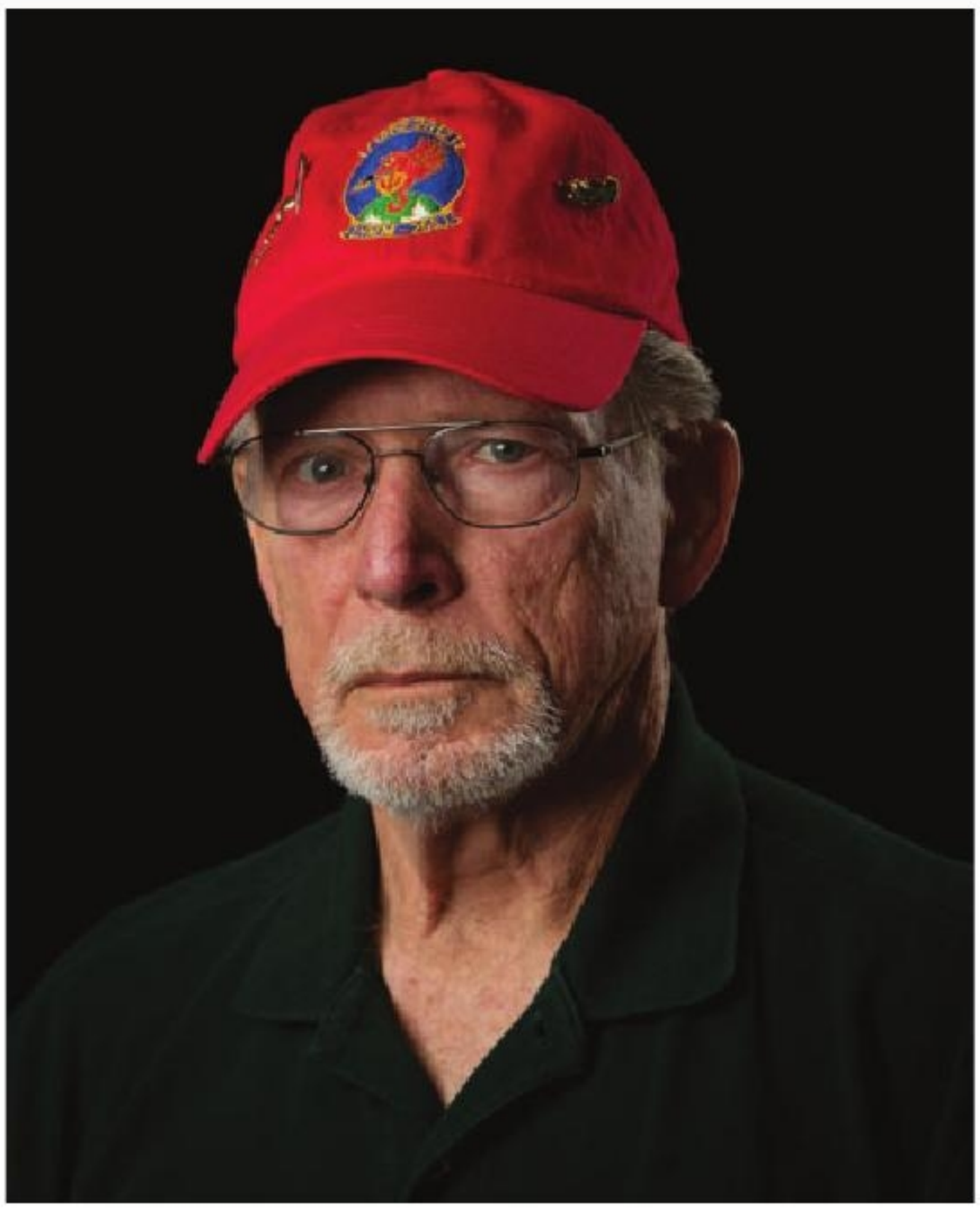


## Althea Mitchell

*"The discipline that I learned has carried me throughout my life. My friends from service have remained lifelong friends."*

**Dates of Service: 1975–1978**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Army**
**Rank during active duty: Specialist 4**

Mitchell volunteered for duty at age 22. She was new to the States and clueless as to what the war was about. But she wanted to go to college, and "Uncle Sam promised that if I signed up, they would pay for it." She remembers crying non-stop during her basic training at Fort McClellan — thinking about the guys who were going through the real thing in Vietnam. Since women were not allowed in combat, she did mostly clerical work. After the war, Mitchell enrolled in college and graduated with a B.A. in accounting.

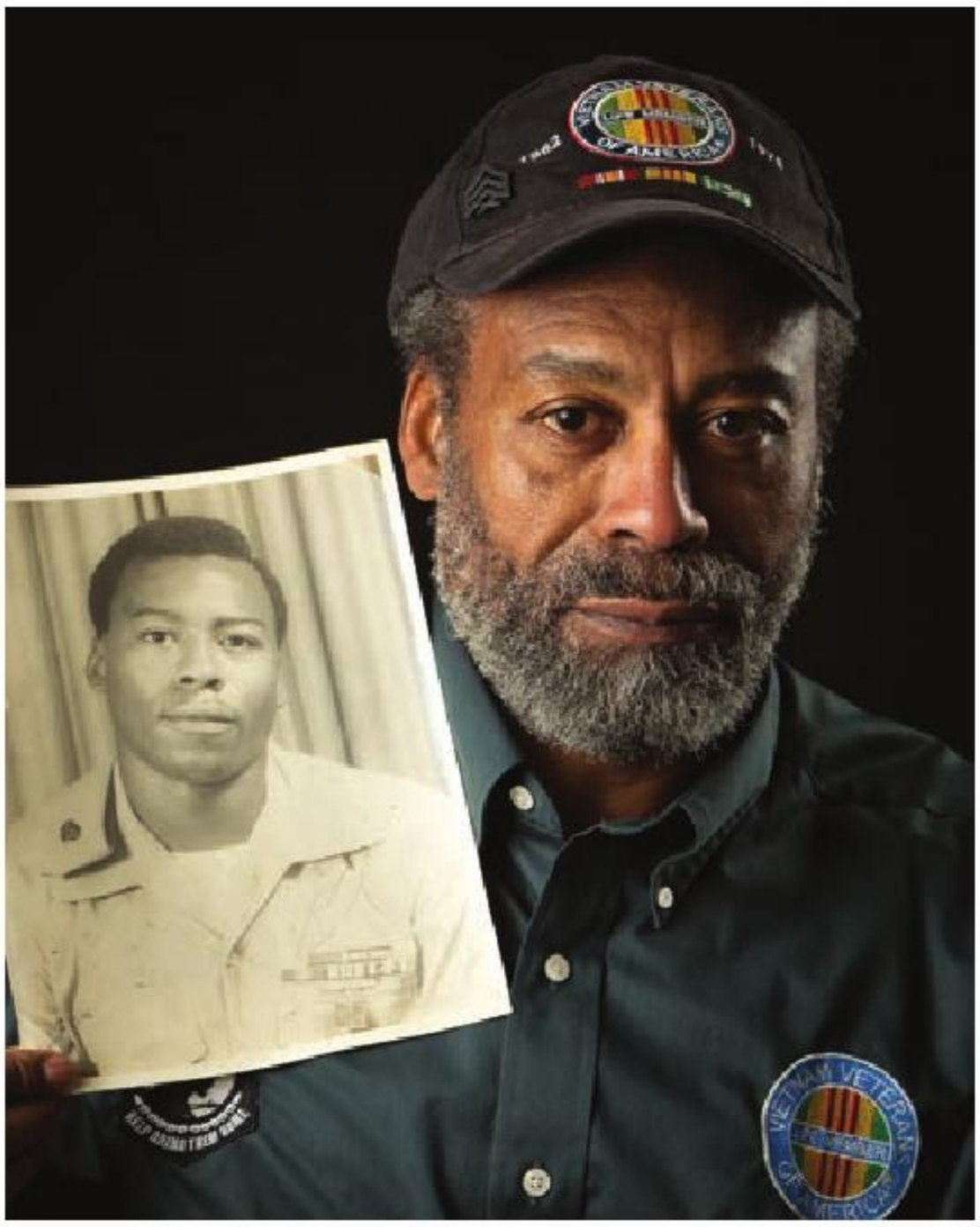


## Raymond (Ray) L. Horwath

*"I was just performing my duties as called to do."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1965–1970**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Marine Corps**
**Rank during active duty: Sergeant Major**

Basic training changed Horwath. While there, he developed discipline and respect for others. Horwath was 17 years old when he first served in the military. He worked as a helicopter avionics technician and an airborne gunner. During a mission, when a nearby helicopter was shot down, he remembers watching the flaming copter all the way to the ground. Later, his own helicopter was gunned down. Between all the action, Horwath was able to go into the nearby city of Da Nang and phone home via HF Radio Patches.



## Abdul Rahman Shareef

*"We were for real and believed in the cause as it was presented – to liberate the country and its people. All gave some, some gave all."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1967–1968**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Marine Corps**
**Rank during active duty: Sergeant 5**

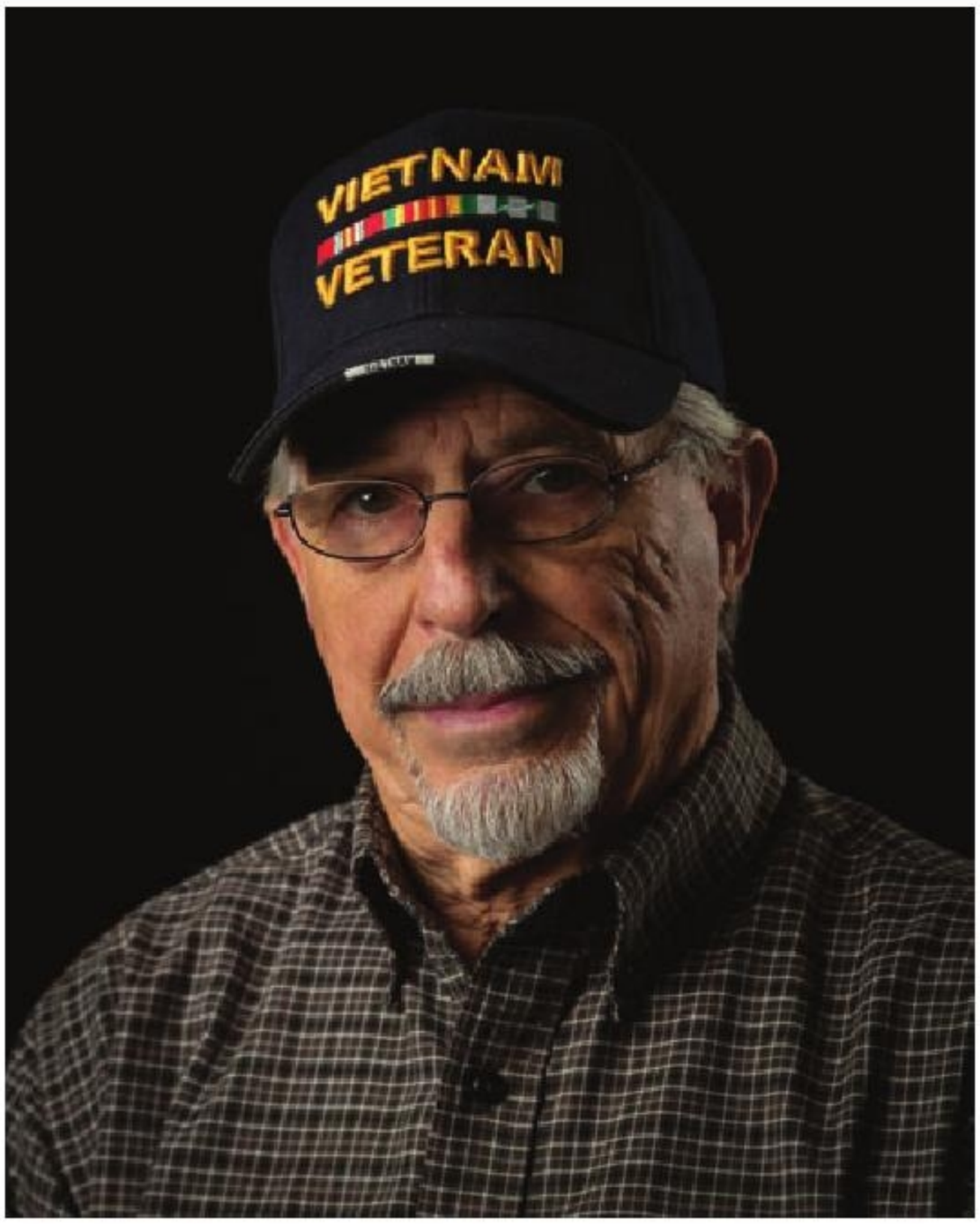
Shareef knew he wanted to be a Marine and joined the infantry at the age of 17. While his mother was unhappy, his father accepted his decision, advising him to stay calm at all times. On his third night in Vietnam, Shareef saw combat by way of mortar fire. Five days prior to his flight home, he was wounded in Khe Sahn. Many of his friends were not as lucky.

## William "Bill" Harris Hamilton Sr.

*"My job was to serve my country to the best of my ability and be proud to be an American. Nothing has changed to this day."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1965–1966**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Navy**
**Rank while on active duty: Radioman Third Class**

Hamilton joined the Naval Reserve when he was just 17 years old – a junior in high school. It was routine to join the service in his family. As a radioman, his job was to patch his shipmates back to the States so they were able to talk to their families by shortwave and landline connections. His ship, the USS *Annapolis*, sailed in and out of combat zones, but he saw little combat up close.

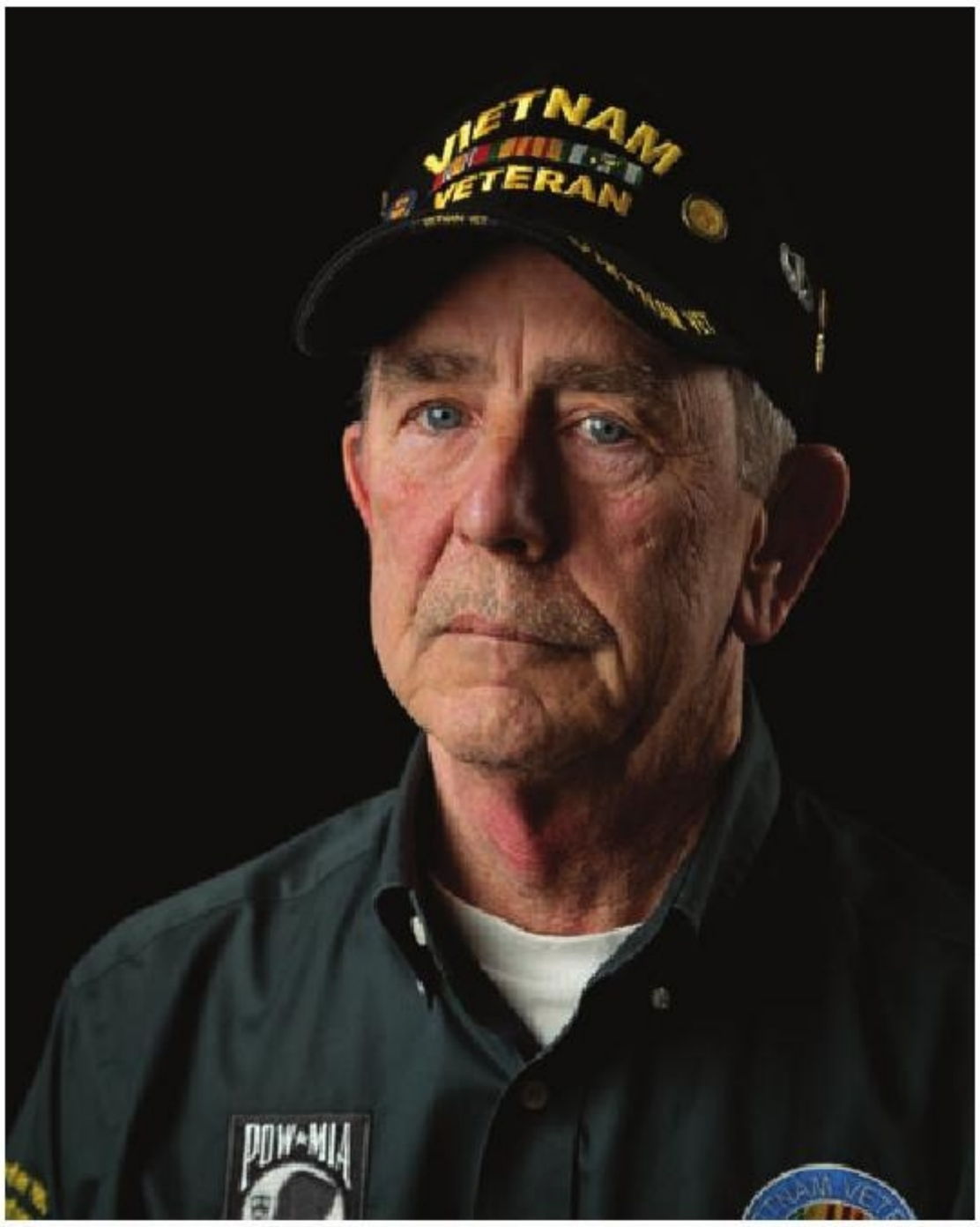


## Rich Hosier

*"I was proud of my service time . . . After thirty years in business, I realized that working as an advisor in Vietnam was the best job I ever had!"*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1967–1969**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Army**
**Rank during active duty: Sergeant**

When Hosier left for Vietnam in 1967, he was 19 years old. At the time, he could not locate Vietnam on a map, much less describe what was happening there. During his basic training at Fort Knox, he and his comrades began to understand the conflict. His job as a team leader in the 6th Psychological Operations Battalion was to broadcast messages and drop leaflets. Hosier remembers traveling to local Vietnam villages with ex-Viet Congs to eat local food — a welcome break from the cold rations they received in the field.



## David J. Johnson

*"At one time we were told not to fire unless fired upon, and that wasn't too good. Lots of lives were lost because you had to do what you had to do."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1967–1968**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Army**
**Rank during active duty: Staff Sergeant**

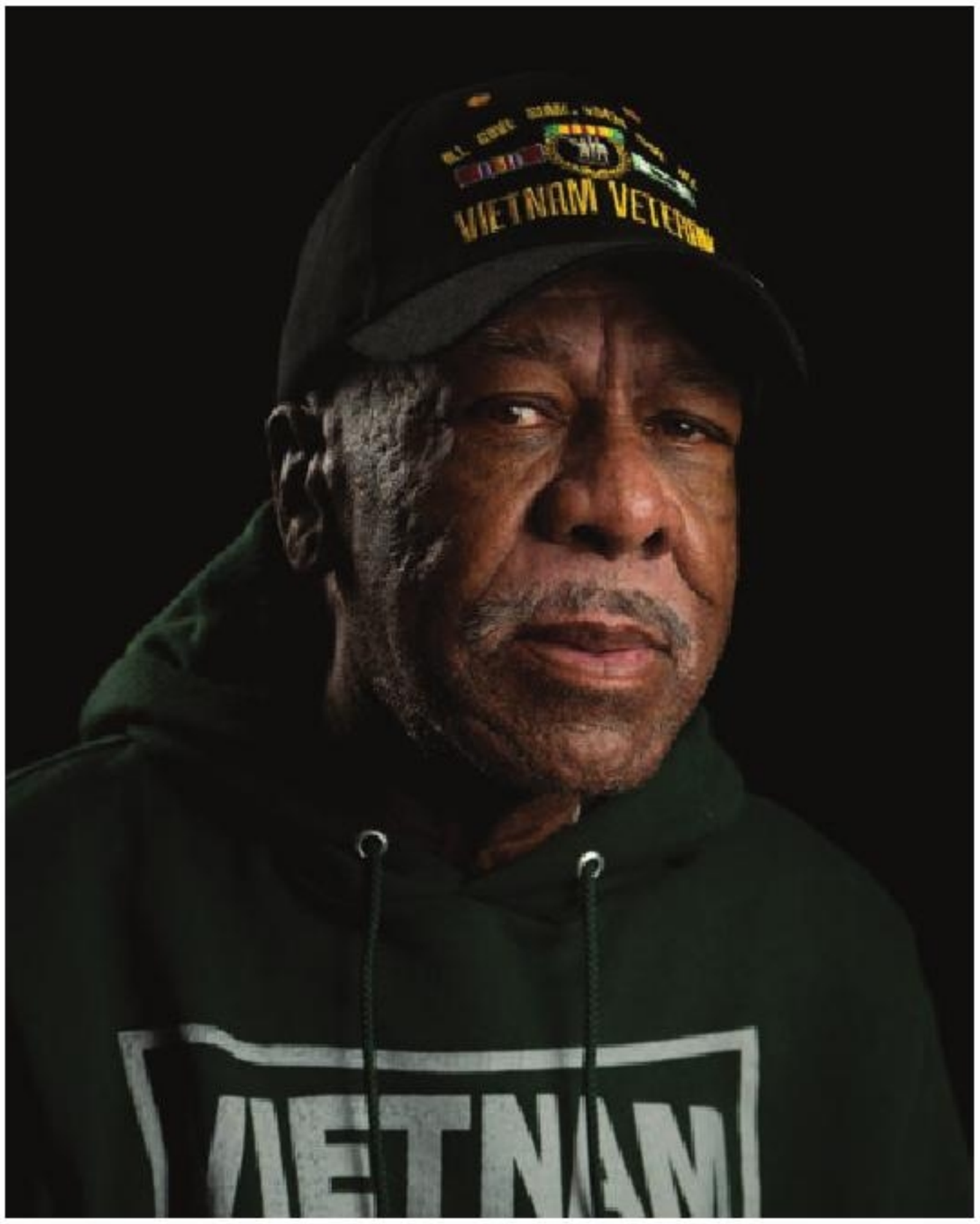
Johnson's family supported his decision to join the Army because, after service, he would have access to education and a better future. He was 19. While in Vietnam, Johnson lost a friend; another was badly injured. He remembers being afraid to trust the people of Vietnam fully, and was even afraid to go to the club that many of his fellow soldiers went to on their off days.

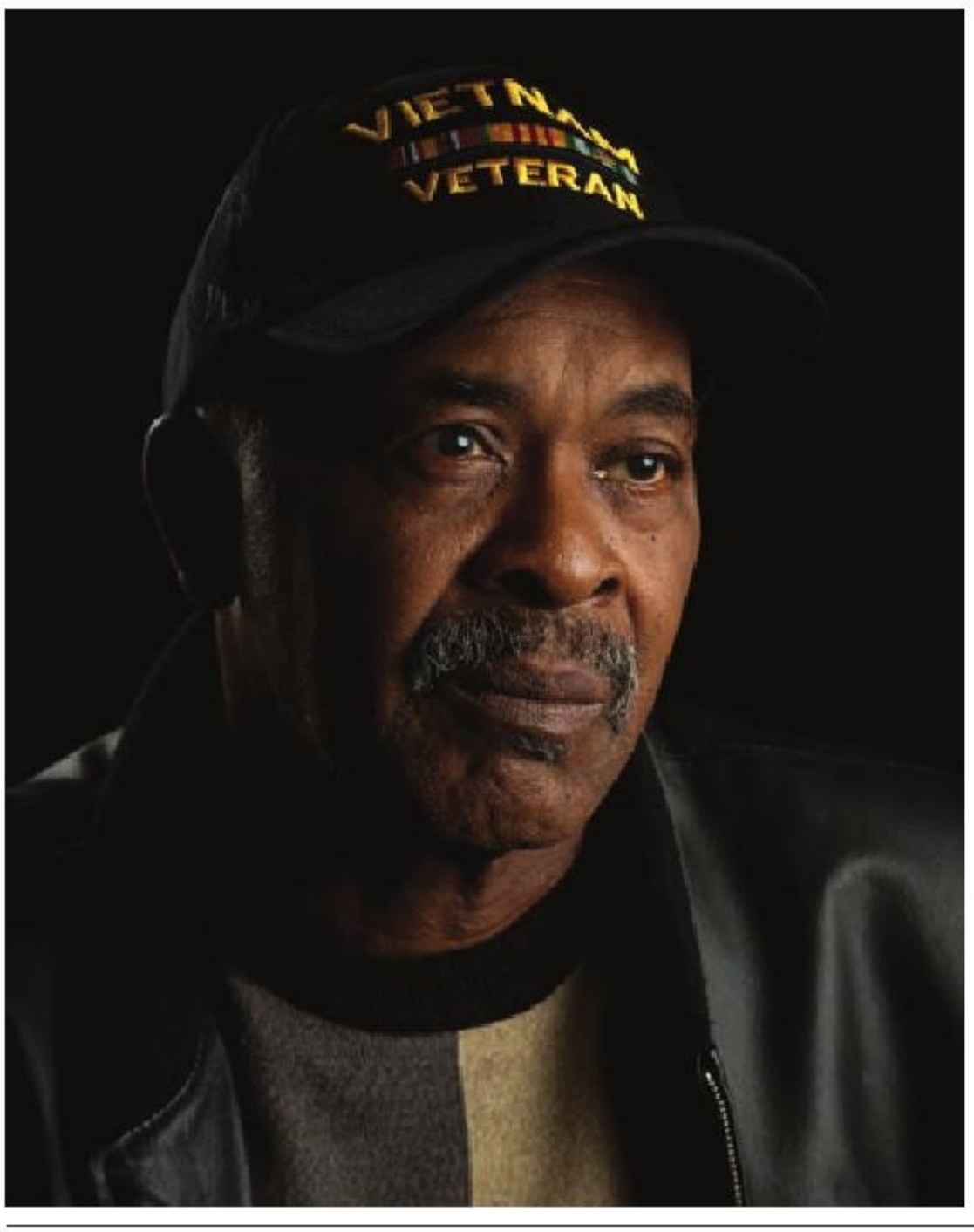
## James I. Hedgebeth

*"It was hard that year, but that's life. Vietnam made me a better man."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1968–1969**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Army**
**Rank During Active Duty: Specialist 5**

Hedgebeth says he liked the Army and felt great when he volunteered with friends at age 19. He enjoyed the training and felt that it prepared him for Vietnam, although as a clerk for the 196th Light Infantry Division, he did not see combat. He received letters from home about three times a week and obtained employment with the Post Office when he returned to the United States.




## Artie Johnson

*"For good luck, I carried a small Bible that I read every day."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1965–1966**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Army**
**Rank During Active Duty: Specialist 4**

Johnson had a good feeling about going into the military and wanted to be a paratrooper when he volunteered at age 18. He joined with his cousin on the "buddy plan" and remembers support from his family on his decision. He credits Basic Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and his additional military experiences with transforming him from boy to man. In Vietnam, he was a heavy weapons crewman and saw combat while assigned to the 101st Airborne Division. One of his most unfortunate memorable experiences is losing four of his buddies.

## Blaine Love

*"We thought we were actually making the world a better place, but even in 1967 the war was getting too political."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1966–1967**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Army**
**Rank during active duty: Specialist 4**

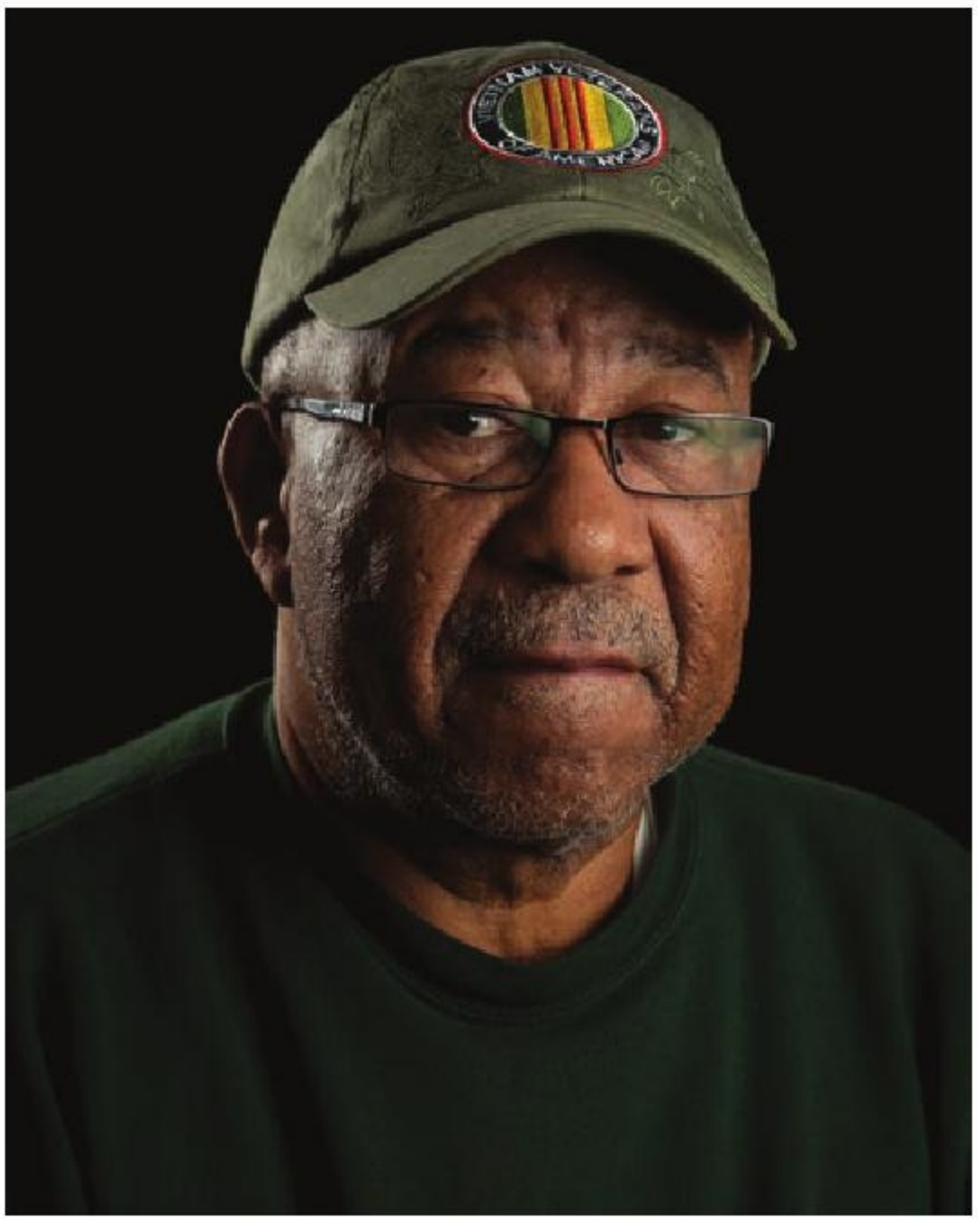
Love volunteered for military duty when he was 21 years old. At the time, his older brother was stationed in Germany. Love served in the Military Police, providing convoy escort, patrol duty and guard duty; he acted as infantry when they went on operations. Fond memories are few and far between, but Love recalls the time he met Bob Hope backstage during a USO tour. One of Love's friends, last name Faith, was with him. Love had a picture taken of the three of them: "Faith, Hope, and Love."

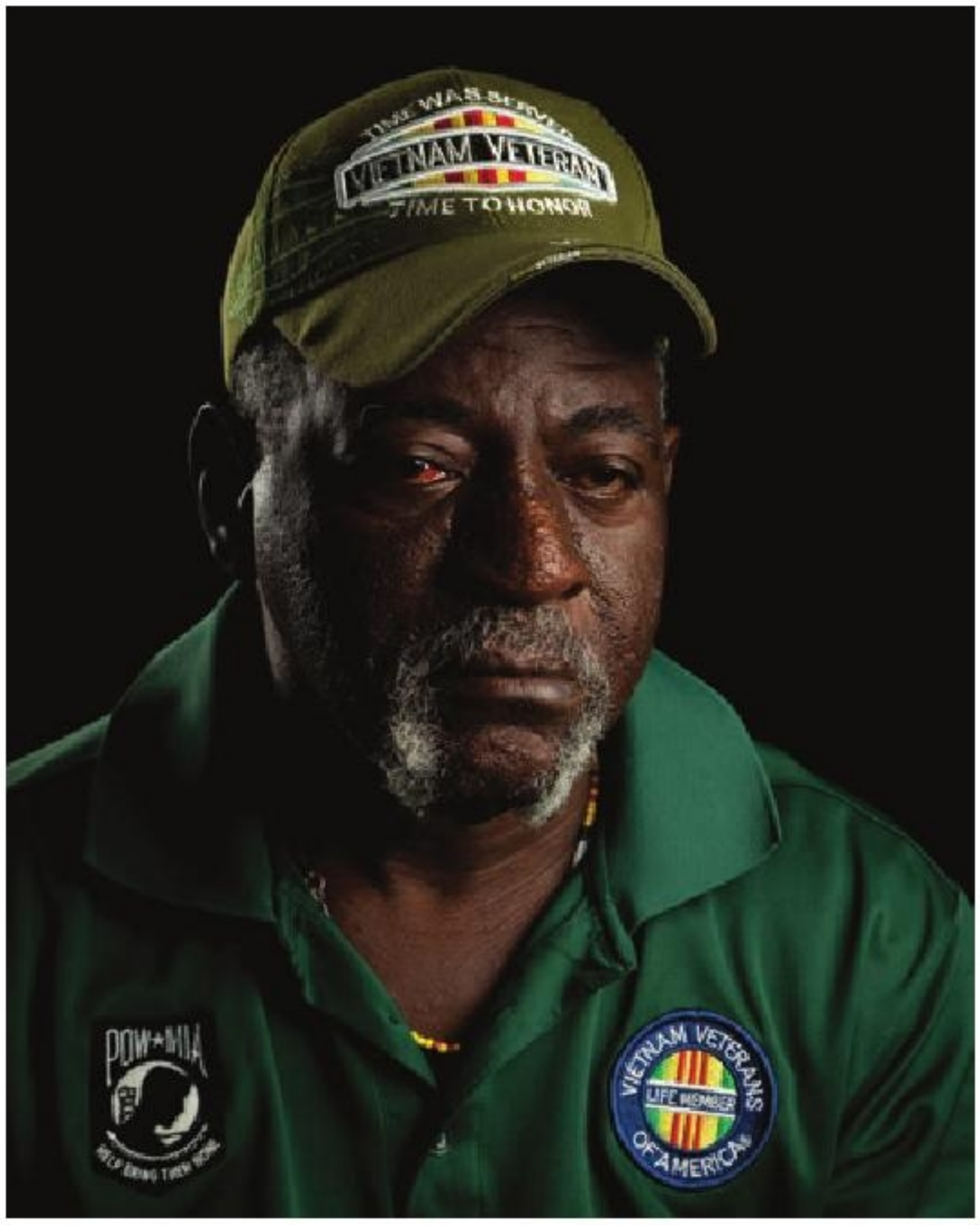
## Tiney Corbett, Jr.

*"I don't regret my service. I went where I was ordered to go just as soldiers before me have done to perform a job."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1969–1971**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Army**
**Rank during active duty: Sergeant**

Corbett was 19 years old when he enlisted. With no money for college, he felt that entry into the military was the right thing to do, especially since his father had fought in World War II. Basic training at Fort Bragg was Corbett's first time away from home, and his mother and friends were not happy about him entering the war. As a combat engineer, he worked with explosives, built bridges, roads, bunkers, and airstrips, and set up base camps.






## Claude E. McDonald

*"I served honorably."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1970–1971**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Air Force**
**Rank during active duty: Master Sergeant**

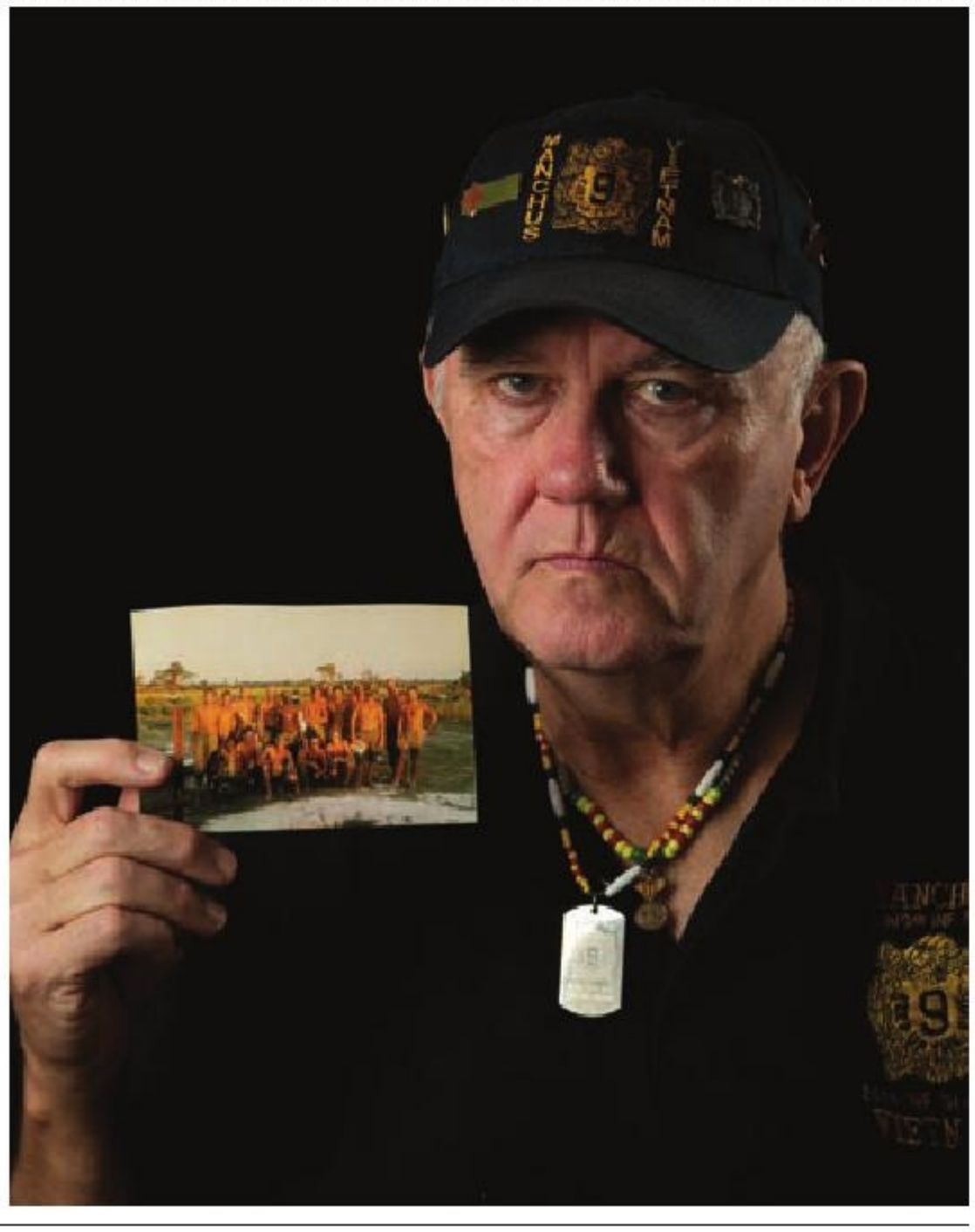
McDonald volunteered for the Air Force at age 18, before he could be drafted into the Army. His parents did not like his decision, but at the time, he felt good about going to serve as a security policeman. The only thing he knew was that men were being sent to Vietnam for the war. He had no idea where the country was. Reality set in when he landed, and he said, "What did I get myself into?"

## Samuel Colman

*"Somehow, because of the guys I was with, we made it. I was lucky."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1968–1969**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Army**
**Rank during active duty: E-4**

Colman was drafted into the Army when he was 21. Just a kid from the suburbs, "I did not know what I was getting into," he said. As part of an infantry unit, he experienced combat. Once, his base camp was hit by the North Vietnamese Army at Mole City. He attributes his survival to his comrades, whom he describes as "real fighters." Amid the fighting, says Colman, somehow they found time to write. He wrote home and to his girlfriend and friends three to four times a week. Whenever a chopper came, it was either delivering food or mail. "We always wanted the mail," he says.

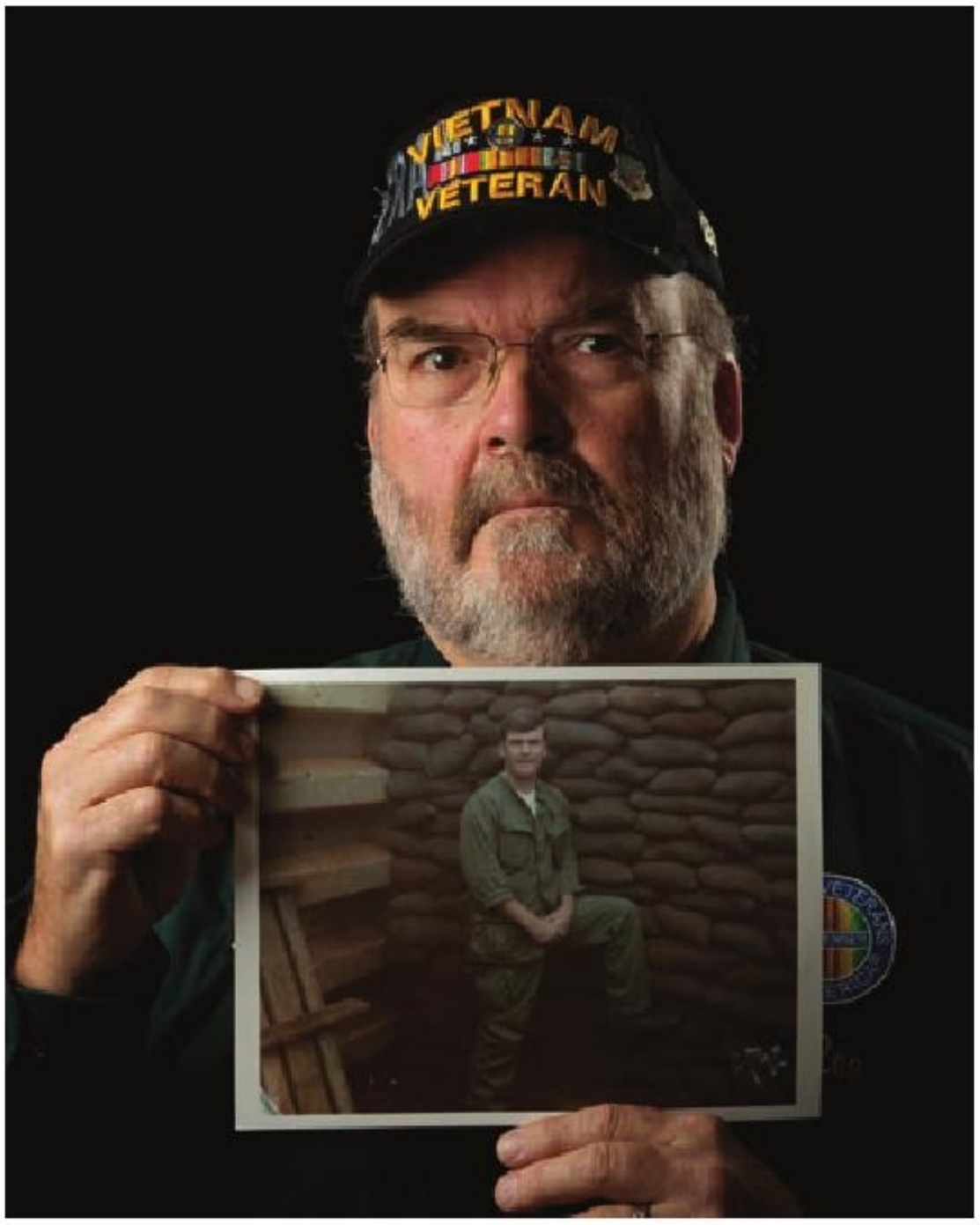


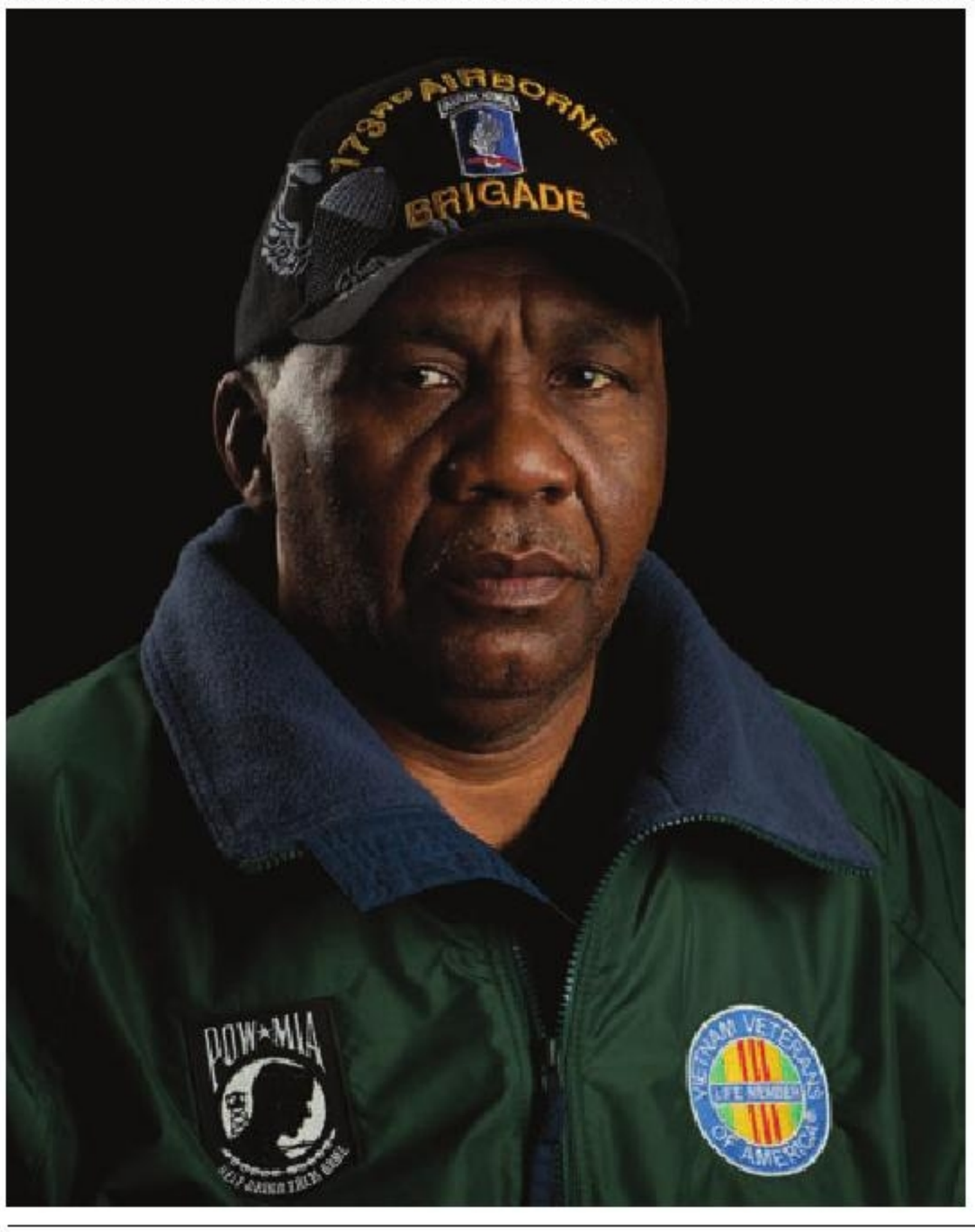
## Les Heller

*"I was young and I was a proud American. I served my country with pride. I grew up quick and would recommend it for anyone. The camaraderie stayed with me throughout my service, and I still think of what I went through and the friends I made."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1971–1972**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Air Force**
**Rank during active duty: Sergeant**

Heller enlisted at age 17 and worked as an air traffic controller. He recalls the time he left his high school ring on a shelf in a shower tent. On his way back to retrieve it, the tent was attacked. He was blown off a wall and later lost the function of his left kidney due to the back injuries he sustained. Between the action, he was able to send letters and cassette tapes home to his loved ones. Heller and his then-girlfriend, Ruth, got engaged through a cassette tape. They recently celebrated their forty-third wedding anniversary.




## William E. Sidberry

*"Nothing prepares you for Vietnam, even though we were trained for what to expect."*

**Dates in Vietnam: 1969–1970**
**Branch of Service: U.S. Army Airborne**
**Rank during active duty: Sergeant**

To his family's displeasure, Sidberry had always wanted to join the Army. When he was 18, he volunteered for service. He did not tell his family he was going to Vietnam until the day before his flight. For extra luck, he carried around a pocket Bible given to him by his younger sister. An airborne infantryman, he saw combat within his first month overseas. He recalls, in list-like form, what he remembers most vividly about his time in Vietnam: the loss of life, the war, the protesters, the sounds, the sights, the monsoons, the jungles, the leeches, the heat.

# Rebirth of a Legend

*Restored to the glory Donald Ross envisioned (and then some), the beloved and popular Wilmington Municipal Golf Course makes a spectacular comeback*

By Jill Gerard · Photographs by Mark Steelman

Some say that those who know and understand golf courses can identify them from the air. Each course is distinctive: fairways leading to the brighter greens, rough and waste areas adding distinct texture, water breaking the green expanse. And perhaps in the courses — whether seen from far above, down the long stretch from a tee box, or from the roadside — we all find some bit of beauty that asks us to pause and take it in. Some find the such vistas sacred. Donald Ross did.

Ross' roots are firmly Scottish, but his story distinctly captures the American dream. He came to the States with little money and a determined optimism. Perhaps he had a sense already of his future, of the hundreds of courses to come. Golf was part of his makeup, and he is reputed to have proclaimed, "The Lord made golf courses; golf architects simply discover them."

While golf has long been associated with affluence — and Ross worked with many affluent clubs — his modest Scottish roots kept his vision tied to the idea that anyone could and should have access to golf. He understood too that public courses made sound business sense, remarking that he saw a "brilliant future for the pay-as-you-enter golf courses of America, a tremendous big, new industry."

The Wilmington Municipal Course began simply enough: conversation, desire and an advertisement that ran in the *Wilmington Morning Star* seeking tracts of land that might make a suitable spot for a municipal course. The city leaders — including county commissioner and bank president Frank Ross, Mayor James H. Cowan and fellow commissioners, Thompson, Cantwell and Wade — understood that a public course would draw tourists in winter and summer. Three tracts of land were offered, the most desirable of which came from the MacRae family: 133 acres near Winter Park Gardens. Oleander Drive, then just a dirt road, and Wrightsville Avenue, the shell road to the beach, made for easy access. The price: $15,625 and an agreement that stipulated the property would continuously be used as a public golf links.

Donald Ross arrived on May 2, 1925. After walking the property, he declared, "The MacRae tract will make an ideal golf course. It is conveniently located to the city, and the variety of topography will provide excellent opportunity to lay out most attractive links." The Wilmington Municipal Course, then just an idea in Ross' mind, was born.

In the early lore, Ross is reputed to have walked the ground, selecting areas for the greens and working backward to tee boxes, hitting balls from high point to high point, building the course to make best use of the beauty and opportunity in the land. Links courses capture nature at its most random, and Ross embraced that notion, working to ensure randomness of size, shape, sand angle, sand depth and bunker face. The result: memorable and beloved golf holes.

**

The course was built with men and mules. By 1926, five holes were completed and the first golf pro, David Patrick, was in residence, inhabiting a one-room log cabin built with trees felled while clearing the links. On May 5, 1926, he predicted that "within two years after its completion, Wilmington's Municipal Golf course will be one of the prettiest in North Carolina."

The course was playable by 1929. The Ross signature was clear: alternating long and short holes, a challenging last hole, bunkers short of the green creating optical illusions. Ross is reported to have remarked it was a difficult course for a municipal course. From the beginning, the course drew players — and they arrived on foot, bicycle or via beach trolley.

Keeping up the course was a labor of love and thrift. In May 1926, twenty tons of fish scrap were used to fertilize the land. In the early days, the greens were not really green at all, for they were made of sand. This cost-saving measure allowed a course to open and function until funding for grass was available. The sand greens were oiled and smoothed with a three-by-five-foot felt rug nailed to a pull rod. Even buying the oil was an additional expense. The maintenance crew could not afford to buy oil, so they looked for less expensive alternatives and collected crankcase oil from automobile service stations. The crew kept the course up and running.

By 1930, a clubhouse provided as a place for golfers to mingle and for course manager and professional to live.

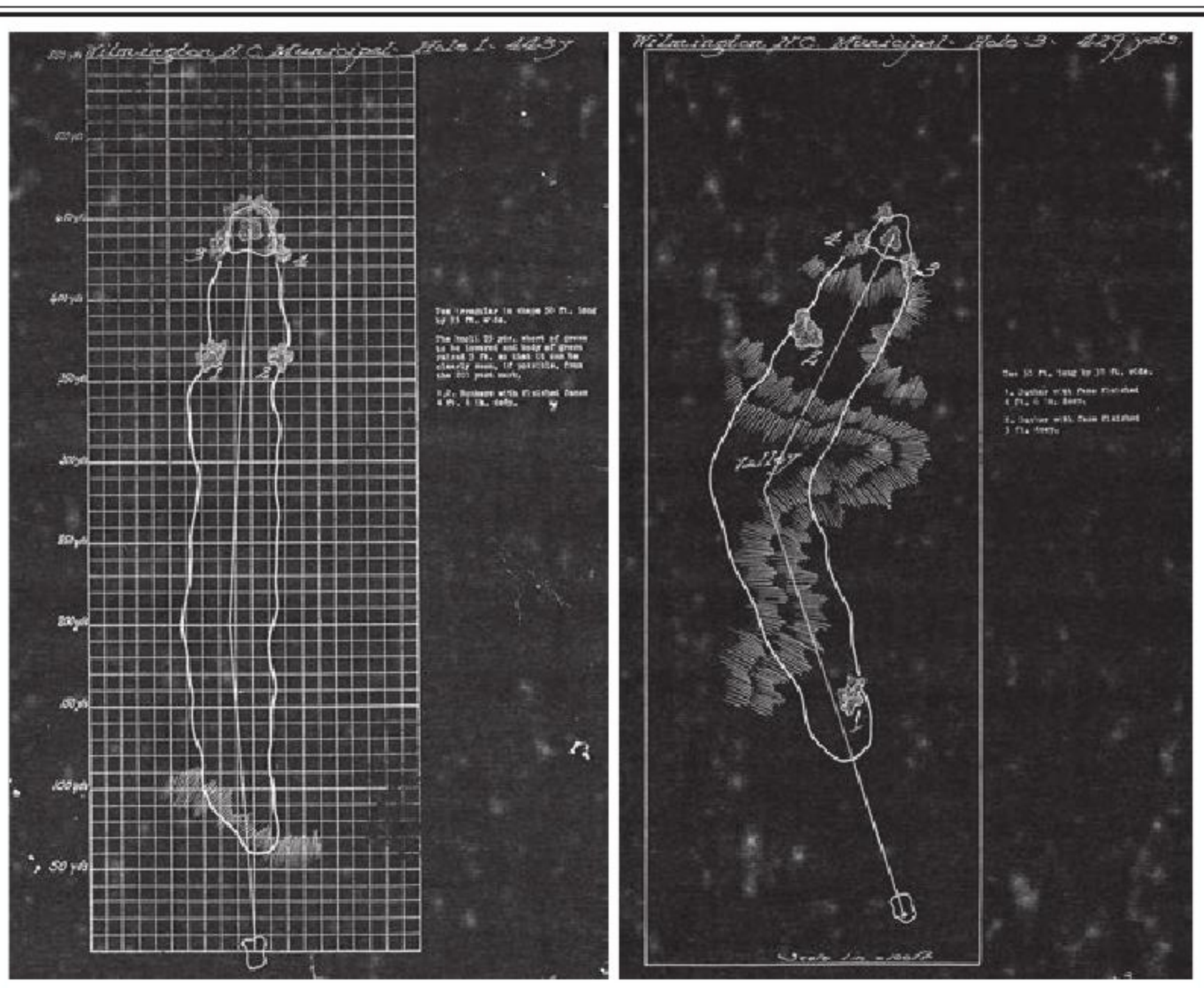
The 1950s saw sand greens converted to Bermuda grass. The decade was a challenge for the muni social issues and problems played out there. At this point, the Wilmington Muni was the only public course between Greensboro, North Carolina, and Charleston, South Carolina. In November 1954, Dr. Hubert Eaton, Dr. D. C. Roane, attorney Robert Band and *Wilmington Journal* editor Tom Jervay integrated the course "by simply going out there one day." While many white golfers abandoned the muni in favor of the new and segregated Pine Valley Country Club, most eventually returned. Wilmington did the right thing in 1954, and the integration made history later on as well. In 1961, three municipal courses that successfully integrated were studied and provided support for the eventual desegregation of the municipal course in Charleston, South Carolina.

Time passed, but the challenges of running a public course never faltered.

In 1957, Lawrence Cook, an outstanding amateur golfer and a local, took on the leadership for the muni. By most accounts, Cook saved it. He described the course as a "Sahara" when he took the job, but he always saw its potential, remarking, "Sweetheart, you're ugly now, but I'm going to make you pretty some day."

Cook was up early mowing the greens. In dry spells, well before dawn, he watered the course using an old pickup truck to get around and drag the heavy hoses. He brought irrigation to the course in 1962, first asking the city for funding — $300 in 1962; $500 in 1963; and $700 in 1964. Although each request was denied, he was determined to make the course the beauty he envisioned. He begged and borrowed motors and pumps from the city's Public Works Department. Cook would often wake at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to crank up the truck, drag out thick rubber hoses, and hand-water the fairways. It would take another twenty years for each green to have its own sprinkler head.

Money challenges were a constant. When Cook approached the city manager about adding golf carts, the response was that the "city wasn't interested in getting in the cart business." Cook found support in a former golf partner and bought four carts. They didn't catch on immediately,



*Donald Ross original plans and notes:*

*Left: Hole #1 - Playing SE, the tee is slightly elevated (the series of straight lines indicates slope) and commenced between the clubhouse and tennis courts in 1925.*

*Right: Hole #3 - A sloped ridge passes across and back the dogleg hole (indicated by the series of straight lines), that plays slightly SW, then NW. Ross did not use sod on bunker faces. The faced greens probably had sand up the high sides, so they were visible on approach.*

*David Donovan, manager and PGA professional*

but things changed in the 1960s when Arnold Palmer started a golf boom. Suddenly, golf was fashionable. The cart business improved, and the muni took another step forward.

During the 1970s, inflation and a recession brought more challenges. The course expenses were high — fertilizer, seed, gas, equipment, manpower. The costs were rising, but income remained static. In 1979, the city council began to consider options to address the budget shortfall. Selling the course was on the table briefly, but since the 1925 agreement stated that the land had to remain a city course or else would revert to the MacRae family, the idea was quickly abandoned.

By 1990, major changes were in store. The contract between Lawrence Cook and the city came to an end, and Bobby Shupp was appointed course manager. He had two assistants, Jean Williams (WPGA) and Hugh Primrose (PGA). The Department of Parks and Recreation became the city agency in charge. By this time the course had seen over 1.5 million rounds of golf played. The Donald Ross Society wrote to the Wilmington City Council recommending that the bunkers be restored and preserved. Cook's dream to "make the course pretty some day" was one step closer.

**

Perhaps it is the braid of community, land and recreation that is most significant. Municipal courses represent something that captures us at our best. Over the decades, there has always been someone who held the potential of the muni in mind. The past year saw the vision turn to reality.

The Wilmington Municipal Golf Course was in a state of renovation from April through October 2014. All summer, huge piles of sand and hundreds of rolls of sod filled the parking lot. Teams of workers carefully dug out bunkers and laid sod.

Last July, as the smoky indigo sky promised more rain, I boarded a golf cart with David Donovan, manager and PGA professional, to get a look at the Wilmington Municipal Golf Course. On another cart just ahead, acclaimed course architect John Fought and Tim Moraghan, former director of championship agronomy for the United States Golf Association and now a sought-after consultant, discussed the renovation. Moraghan had a ready smile, his face ruddy from the sun. They pointed to landscape features, talking all the while. I smiled, too, as I caught bits of conversation that carried over the hum of the carts. At each stop, Donovan, Fought and Moraghan discussed the sight lines, trees and grasses.

Earlier, Donovan had told me about the start of the project and the sense of responsibility that came with the renovation. The goal was to honor the original design but to add a bit of a pizzazz as well. He mentioned the sense

of community that is so important to the muni and the role that municipal courses fill, providing access and affordability so that anyone can pick up a club and enjoy the game.

Their passion for the game and the course was clear as Fought described work completed and Donovan told of what used to be. The word that echoed through the more technical conversation: fun.

The course reopened in October 2014. Tee boxes have been renovated and raised, bunkers rebuilt, greens enlarged, reshaped and raised. The focus on Donald Ross' original plan and the natural character of the land itself restored the course to Ross' intended vision. Even holes with a straight line look fluid, as bunkers rise along the fairways and embrace the greens. The fairways undulate, a pattern of green that asks even the drivers on busy Pine Grove Drive to slow down. It is clear that the golfers are happy to have the course back.

Lawrence Cook would be pleased.

**

The one constant in life is change. Dave Donovan took over as PGA professional in 2007. While he has worked on larger and more well-known courses, the Wilmington Municipal Golf Course represented an approach to golf and to life that appeals to him. His work to provide access to junior golfers speaks to his values. He organized a middle school golf team in 2008, served on the PGA President's Council on Growing the Game, and has done so much to make golf accessible to all players.

Under Donovan's leadership, the course has come full circle. His goal to bring the course back to Ross' original plan is complete. He has praised John Fought's architectural guidance and Duininck Golf Construction's expertise.

Fought's approach to course architecture and restoration sounds deceptively simple: technical skills, an understanding of the game, and imagination. But things that sound simple demand a particular kind of attentiveness and understanding. Looking back to original plans was key to this renovation. Turf was added to the greens back in the 1950s. At that time, the greens were the sand greens put in place until the next phase was possible. For the muni, that phase came after Ross' death, and the smaller greens that were in place at that time were turned to turf. Those smaller greens were not the greens that Ross designed, and Fought made Ross' plan the reality. Today, the greens are larger, living into Ross' vision.

Bunkering, Ross' hazard of choice, creates a special challenge requiring strategy to avoid the steep-sided pits. Today, golfers find scooped-out pits, deeper drop-offs and new challenges. Ross designed for smart play. On a Ross course, all shots are needed.

When I asked Fought if he had a favorite hole on the course, he laughed and said that the holes were a bit like children: each one unique, each with its own identity. One hole often praised is number three. *Golf Digest* named it one of the best in the state. The dogleg stretches along the back of the property, bending slightly to the right. Players will find the green has moved farther away from nearby homes and trees. Fought remarked that holes nine and eighteen are really huge improvements. On eighteen, many trees cluttered the area, and bunkers were in the wrong place. Today, the fairways are opened up and twin bunkers frame the approach. After a brief pause, Fought concluded, "the par-3s are really interesting holes that live into the challenge that Ross envisioned."

Ross left copious notes and plans, gathered at the Tufts Archives in Pinehurst, North Carolina. Thus, Fought had the opportunity to take the course back in time even as he embraced modern technological advances that will help with drainage and irrigation. He took the course "as close to the plan as possible." The changes embrace Ross' ideal and promote the art of chipping and thoughtful decision-making. The larger greens create roll-off positions and allow for a variety of pin placement options. Putts are more likely to break with the slight rising of some of the greens. One of the magical elements of a Ross course is the sense of ease on the surface. Each player will find a challenge as all shots are needed on a Ross course.

The course is visually striking. Colors and textures of the grasses create a rich landscape: bunkers are faced with zoysia grass, and one will now find Bermuda 419 collars and greens of MiniVerde dwarf Bermuda. Stands of native pine and oak break the landscape without creating intrusions on the fairways. The glimmer of the pond at holes four and five provides variation in color and hue.

Ultimately, golfers will find a remade course that balances the original design with modern technical advances and ushers in a new century of golf on one of the best public courses one can find. Fought commented, "This is beautiful for the simplicity of the routing. It's not overly difficult but still challenging. It fits on the land nicely. It gives people a taste of everything they need without being too hard to maintain. Ross knew what he was doing."

Fought noted, "In Scotland, golf is a way to spend a life. It's not about building monuments." Renovating and restoring the course makes it something permanent. The design is artwork. The design demands skill and attention from the golfer. It makes the most important and worthy goal reachable: a round of golf that challenges yet is enjoyable.

As I said goodbye to Fought and Donovan last August, Fought confided, "the course is really interesting—and way better than people think, too. It will be fun. Too many courses today are designed to be hard. There's enough hard in the world. What we need is more enjoyable."

*Jill Gerard, essayist and poet, lives on the banks of Whiskey Creek with her husband, children, and dogs. She finds inspiration in the natural world.*

# The Miracle House

*An unplanned life journey brought the Tucker family home to a different Eden*

By Ashley Wahl · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Once upon a time in Eden, on a lush 65-acre lot not far from the Dan River, a roofing contractor and the daughter of a fourth generation farmer decided to start a family.

Liz was born in August 1985, hottest day of the year. Callie came in February 1989, on the coldest.

"Total opposites," says Susan Tucker of her daughters.

But both love to travel.

Since Tommy was a licensed pilot and Susan was an elementary school teacher, summers were always a time of adventure for the Tucker family. One destination continued to draw them year after year: Ocean Isle Beach.

The summer Liz would turn 4, the Tuckers bought a vacation home on one of the canals on Ocean Isle. The girls thought it was the most magical place on Earth — a place they could swim, fish, crab, take boat rides, sprawl on the dock and soak up the sun. When they were old enough, says Susan, "they could take the golf cart by themselves to get ice cream, ride the water slide, play Putt-Putt and play games at the pier."

Home was Eden, but the Atlantic Ocean was like tonic to the soul, especially for Liz, a true babe of summer who loved to sit in the front of the helicopter with Tommy and point out familiar landmarks as they left Rockingham County and approached their coastal hideaway.

As it would turn out, when Tommy and Susan were closing on that beloved coastal hideaway, a patio home in Landfall was still gleaming from its first coat of paint. And while that house would mean nothing to the Tucker family for more than 20 years — they did not even know it was here — it would ultimately become their harbor when the tides of life required them to re-navigate.

The Tuckers sold their Ocean Isle home when summer jobs kept the girls tethered close to home.

"Liz was a waitress at a local seafood restaurant, and Callie was a lifeguard," says Susan. "We just didn't have a chance to go as often as before."

But Liz found her way back to the beach by enrolling at UNCW as a finance major. After graduating with honors in December 2006, she enrolled at ECU to pursue a master's in speech language pathology. UNCW did not offer the program.

"She planned to live in Wilmington after she graduated and work there as a

speech therapist," explains Susan. But on April 8, 2009, "life as we knew it came to screeching halt."

Liz was diagnosed with a brain tumor that the doctors called oligodendroglioma.

Tommy and Susan sought out Duke University Medical Center's Allan Friedman, the neurosurgeon who operated on Senator Ted Kennedy, and surgery was scheduled for May. After what can only be described as a miraculous recovery, Liz returned to school at ECU that fall and graduated the following spring with the rest of her class.

Because of the nature of the tumor, Liz receives regular checkups at Duke.

"It's something she is meant to live with for the rest of her life," says Susan.

During her internship with Davis Health Care Center in Wilmington, Liz stayed in the Carleton Place condo she'd lived in as an undergrad, and Tommy and Susan began searching for a place nearby to call home on weekends or if their daughter needed them.

Landfall instantly appealed to them.

"We looked at many, many houses before our realtor showed us this patio home in Prestwick," says Susan. "We looked at some magnificent places. Some with pools, some on the golf course, some with guest quarters. But the instant I saw this home, I said to Tommy, 'This is the place I want.'"

Oyster shell stucco adds storybook whimsy to an otherwise plain but tastefully landscaped one-story structure nestled on a quiet pond at the end of a cul-de-sac.

When the Tuckers first saw it, the interior was, to put it kindly, still dressed for tea circa 1987.

Enter Barbara Kornegay, a DIY local designer with a knack for recycling old furniture and finding harmony between chic and simple. She spearfishes, scavenges, brings her own sledge hammer for demolitions.

"I am Jane of all trades," says Kornegay, introducing herself and her company's name, J.O.A.T., aka Jane Of All Trades. Kornegay renovated her first house in her early 20s. "I do everything."

Landfall gatekeepers know her as the spunky redhead in the white '96 Ford F-150, ideal for hauling furniture.

For the Tuckers' 1,900-square-foot home, Kornegay envisioned an open space filled with light.

"It was totally closed in," she says, especially the kitchen.

Never more.

"We had many ideas from our years of traveling about what we wanted," says Susan. "Barbara made them all come to life."

Remodeling by Erik gutted the interior and installed bullnose corner bead, lighted crown moulding and ceramic tile flooring.

Kornegay asked the Tuckers for favorite artwork that might serve as inspiration for the overall design. They handed her a pair of primitive folk paintings they found at a gift shop in the Dominican Republic, the first real vacation they'd taken since Liz's surgery. Susan recalls feeling "strangely drawn" to their vibrant colors.

"They represented freedom, movement, brightness, excitement and joy," says Susan, "emotions that had been somewhat forgotten during all of our time spent at Duke with surgery, recovery and appointments. I had the owner of the shop take the canvases off their frames, cover them with paper, and roll them up so that I could carry them home with me on the plane."

Mounted against sand-colored walls, blue, orange, yellow and purple pop.

"We wanted a comfortable den with welcoming furnishings," says Susan. "Nothing stuffy."

They arrived to find just that, an open floor plan with Caribbean-style décor and comfy furniture fit for an island resort.

Kornegay's touch is subtle yet unmistakable. In the foyer, for instance, a reinvented mirror features ceiling tin salvaged from a building in downtown Wilmington. A corner chair — "old Pottery Barn," says the designer — was the former "wedge" of another client's sectional. Legs were sawed off a buffet cabinet

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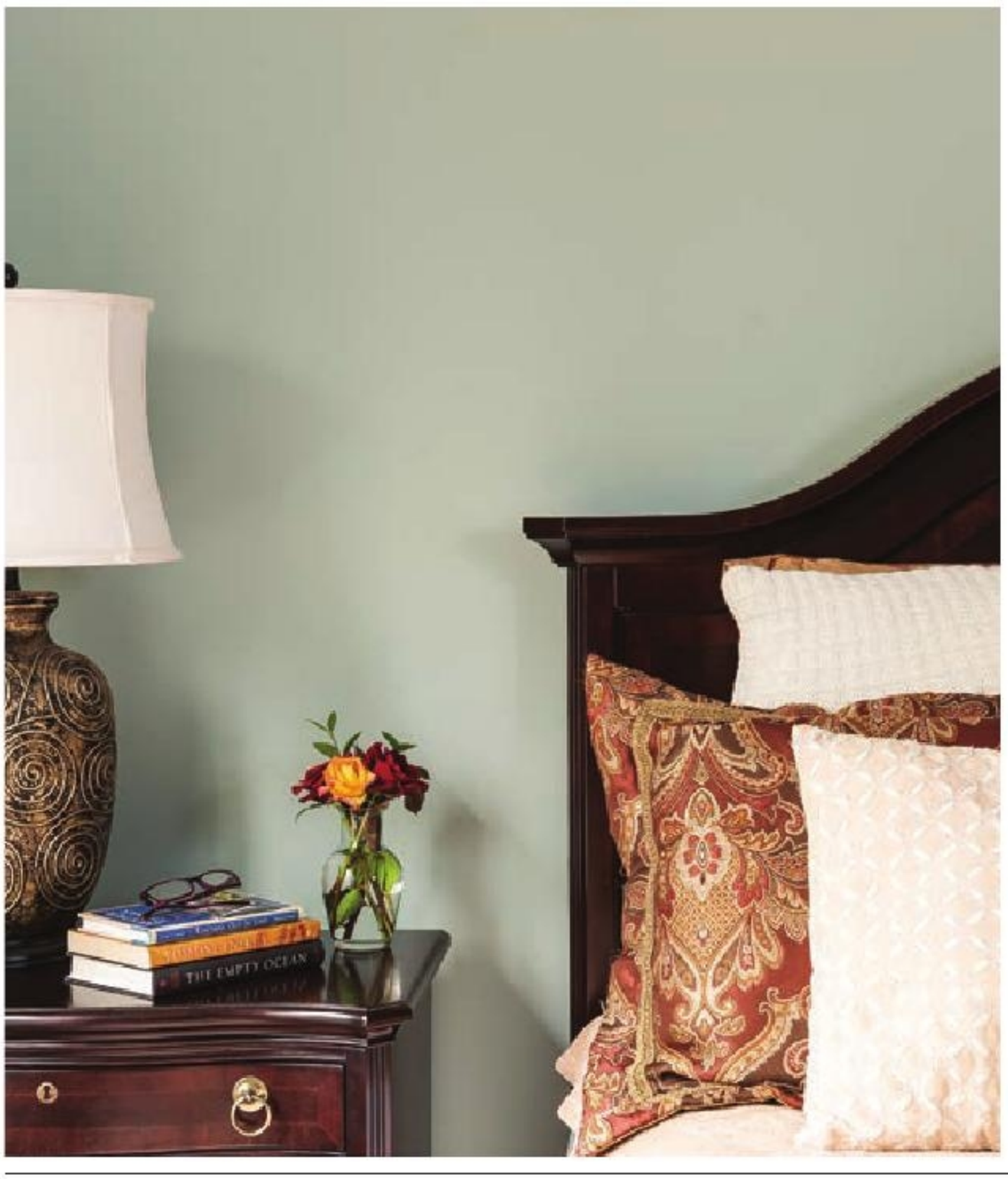


to create a custom accent table, a perfect fit behind the white Pottery Barn sofa.

Yes, says Kornegay, it's OK to break the rules.

Distressed Mango furniture and sunny colored throw pillows complement the island art.

"My mother made all but two of them," says Kornegay, who hand-picked the fabric.

Lane Venture wicker chairs — good for card playing — create an air of comfort at the dining table.

As for the kitchen cabinets, dingy laminate was replaced with custom cherry, and the entire family can sit around the granite top island, complete with pulley pendant lights.

Tommy made and installed the copper gutters.

In 2011, shortly after the transformation was complete, Liz moved back to Eden when a speech-language position became available. Although the Tuckers still live in a big house in Eden, their modest patio home has become the place they spend holidays and much-needed getaways.

They've taken to calling it the Miracle House.

"It's just a simple little house," says Susan, "but it's a retreat for all of us."

For Liz, it's a version of Eden — not the Eden of Rockingham County, but one that recalls the coastal paradise of her youth.

"When I go to Wilmington," she tells her mother, "nothing hurts."

In fact, Liz is planning a June wedding.

The destination has not yet been determined.

Perhaps here, says Susan, of Paradise.

*The Tuckers help raise funds for the Preston Robert Tisch Brain Tumor Center at Duke through the annual Angels Among Us walk each spring. Liz's team: Pink Princess and Bentley Allan. For more information, visit www.angelsamongus.org.*

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ALMANAC

# March

By Noah Salt

## March's Garden To-Do List

The garden awaits, and there's plenty to do. Let's get to it, people.

• This is the last good time to trim off dead wood from shrubs and perennials.

• Rake out over-wintered flower and vegetable beds, weed and add composted material to improve the soil. If you haven't done so in the past, send soil samples for testing. Check your local garden center for recommended resources.

• This is a great time to visit public gardens to see elements of early spring and to gain useful insights on planting schemes and design.

• Feed roses with organic blend of cottonseed meal and composted manure.

• Time to plan cold-loving vegetables such as radishes, spinach, Asian greens, lettuce, broccoli, parsley and early peas.

• Harden off tomatoes, peppers and eggplant by moving out doors to a cold frame. You may safely plant them in the garden after final frost, which generally happens in most of the state between April 10–20.

• Early March is really the last good time to transplant perennials and plant trees and shrubs before autumn.

• Do an inventory of your garden shed, repair tools and organize equipment. Now's the time to get your lawn mower tuned up, even as you apply an early spring organic fertilizer.

New feet within my garden go
  New fingers stir the sod;
A troubadour upon the elm
  Betrays the solitude.

New children play upon the green,
  New weary sleep below;
And still the pensive spring returns,
  And still the punctual snow!

— Emily Dickinson, 1881

*Imagination, new and strange*
*  In every age, can turn the year;*
*Can shift the poles md lightly change*
*  The mood of men, the world's career.*

The lovely lines above constitute the final stanza of one of our favorite poems — *Imagination* — by the Scottish playwright and poet John Davidson, who drowned at age 51 in the ocean off England's Land's End on March 23, 1909, allegedly a suicide. Though he was greatly admired by the likes of William Butler Yeats and George Bernard Shaw, Davidson's life was turbulent and wracked by poverty and frustration. After failing as a playwright he turned to light verse and found his voice, becoming an admired balladeer and eventually inspiring a younger generation of poets belonging to the so-called modern age, like Wallace Stevens and T.S. Eliot.

The month of March is famous for its own brand of turbulence — our biggest snowstorms often come, violent rains that herald a change of season, the mythical Ides of March, and so forth — yet strikes us as a month when the human imagination yearns to be freed from its winter quarters and turned loose in a dozen directions at once. The gardener sees new life exploding from the Earth and is suddenly brimming with ideas that can "change the year" and lighten the "mood of men." House sales rise with the mercury, birdsong sets loose raptures of anticipation, young men's hearts turn to love, and — well, we could go on and on. The possibilities are only as limited as one's imagination. As John Davidson reminds us with his elegy:

*There is a dish to hold the sea,*
*  A brazier to contain the Sun,*
*A compass for the galaxy,*
*  A voice to wake the dead and done!*
*So welcome, Spring. Welcome indeed.*

## Dream Gardens

*To see a garden in your dreams, filled with evergreen and flowers, according to experts on the subject, denotes great peace of mind and comfort. If you dream of walking on a well-kept lawn, you are in for an occasion of joy and prosperity. Raking and weeding suggests work still to be done, while to dream of using a lawn mower means you may soon be engaged in a tedious social function – after you finish up the lawn first, of course. To dream of seeing flowers in bloom and full color signifies pleasure and gain, while dreaming of walking through a park with your lover simply means you will be happily married for a very long time.*

## March 2015

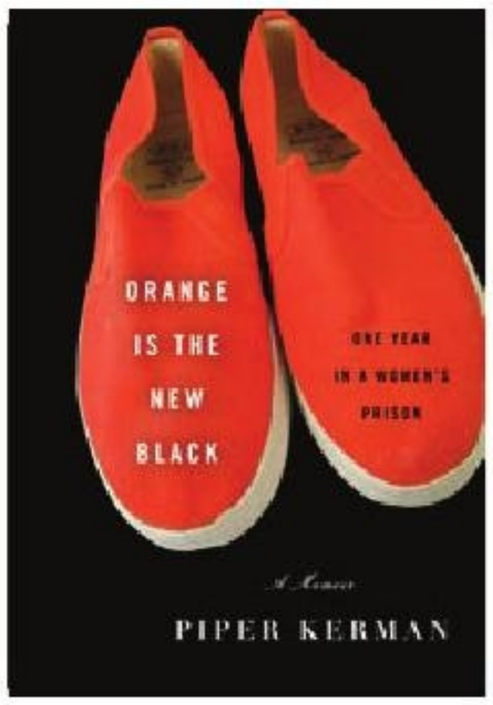
# Arts Calendar

## Sunday Funnies

## 3/1&8

## Aquila Theatre presents *Wuthering Heights*

## 3/2




## Piper Kerman Lecture

## 3/3

## Cape Fear Beer Fest

## 3/7

### 3/1 Wedding Showcase

12–3 p.m. *The Perfect Wedding Planner Magazine* presents dozens of local vendors. Think food, music, formal wear, transportation and more. Admission: $5. Holiday Inn Resort, 1706 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 793-4044 or www.theperfectweddingplanner.com/wedding_show.html.

### 3/1 History Program

2–4 p.m. *New Takes on an Old Story: Irish History.* Dr. Paul Townend presents an overview of Irish history: Who were the Irish? Ireland and the Vikings; Alcohol and the Irish; and the Globalized Irish. Live entertainment includes UNCW's Irish Dance Club Slainte and the Port City Irish Band. Food provided by The Harp. Free. NHC Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6371 or www.nhclibrary.org.

### 3/1 Homebrew Competition Awards

3–7 p.m. Awards ceremony for the Lower Cape Fear Homebrew Competition. Overall "Best of Show" will be brewed and distributed by Front Street Brewery. Live music by The Coastline Collective. Admission: $5. Ziggy's by the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1935 or ziggysbythesea.com.

### 3/1 & 8 Sunday Funnies

6 p.m. Kick off Wilmington native Orlando Jones' 2015 Comedy Tour with laugh-out-loud fun. Admission: $30. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

### 3/2 Kids Comedy Workshop

4 p.m. Improvisation and comedy games for ages 8 and up. Create and tell stories through dialogue, articulate ideas, work with peers and develop vocabularies. Free. Myrtle Grove Public Library, 5155 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6393 or www.nhclibrary.org.

### 3/2 Live Theater

7:30 p.m. Aquila Theatre presents Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, the legendary story of passion and revenge between ill-fated lovers Catherine and Heathcliff. Admission: $27–29. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road NW, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

### 3/3 Lecture

7 p.m. Piper Kerman on her critically acclaimed memoir-turned-Netflix series, *Orange is the New Black*, in which she recounts the year she spent in prison serving time for a crime she committed ten years prior. The book is a compelling conversation about the women she met while incarcerated, raising issues of friendship and family, codes of behavior, and the almost complete lack of guidance for life after prison. Admission: $10. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-7722 or uncw.edu/presents/UNCWPresentsPiperKerman.html.

### 3/3 Lecture

7 p.m. Joseph Sheppard discusses Jane D. Wood and 1930s Depression relief efforts. As chairman of the women's Block Messenger System during the Depression, Wood led efforts to enable people to grow food to feed their families by organizing a neighborhood cooperative and individual gardens. Donations appreciated. Latimer House, 126 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0492 or www.hslcf.org.

### 3/4–11 Encore Restaurant Week

Eight-day culinary celebration featuring more than thirty restaurants throughout the Port City; prix fixe menus at special prices. Various locations in Wilmington, Leland & Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 791-0688 or www.encorerestaurantweek.com.

### 3/5 Coastal Consumer Showcase

4–7 p.m. Explore an array of products and services in the Southport-Oak Island area. Food samples, seminars, giveaways, Chinese auction and more. Free. St. James Community Center, 4136 Southport-Supply Road, St. James. Info: (910) 457-6964 or www.southport-oakisland.com.

### 3/5 Jazz at the CAM

6:30–8 p.m. Live music by Doug Irving Trio. Admission: $5–12. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

### 3/5 Art Opening Reception

6:30–8:30 p.m. Opening reception for David A. Norris' *A Copious Plenty: Sketching and Drawing the Lower Cape Fear*, watercolors on toned paper with pencil, gouache and ink. Artful Living Group, 112 Cape Fear Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-7822 or www.artfullivinggroup.com.

### 3/5–8 Live Theater

8 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). City Stage performs *A Lie of the Mind* by Sam Shepard, a tragic comedy about a young woman who is beaten by her husband and survives with severe brain damage. Explores family dysfunction and the nature of love through co-dependent relationships. Also runs 3/13–15 & 3/20–22. Admission: $18–25. City Stage, 21 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 264-2602 or www.citystagenc.com.

### 3/6 Full Moon Cruise

6–8 p.m. Enjoy the sunset and watch the full moon rise over the Cape Fear River aboard a 49-passenger power catamaran. Light appetizers included; cash bar available. Admission: $24.50. Wilmington Water Tours, 212 South Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 338-3134 or www.wilmingtonwatertours.net.

### 3/6 Taps & Casks

6–9 p.m. Preview the Cape Fear Beer Fest with a special rare Casks tasting event. Ironclad Brewery will serve up select specialty brews

## English High Tea

## 3/14

to a limited crowd. Guest list is limited to 225. Admission: $45. Ironclad Brewery, 115 North Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5101 or capefearbeerfest.com.

### 3/6 NC Azalea Pre-Festival Party

7 p.m. Kick off the NC Azalea Festival with more than 600 people. Party includes beer, wine, heavy hors d'oeuvres, live music and dancing. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/prefestival-party.

### 3/6–8 Live Theatre

8 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Opera House Theatre Company presents the award-winning musical thriller *Sweeney Todd*. Admission: $29. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### 3/7 Cape Fear Beer Fest

12–5 p.m. Unlimited tasting of more than 100 craft and international beers, wines and ciders from some of the finest brew masters in the world. Food options available for purchase. Admission: $35–50. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: capefearbeerfest.com.

### 3/7 Cape Fear Literacy Gala

6:30 p.m. Themed fundraiser/celebration for the Cape Fear Literacy Council — *Mad Hatter's Tea Party* — inspired by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Highlights include "high tea," fantasy-inspired chef tastings, silent and vocal auctions, Wonderland garden games, photo booth, and an evening of dancing under the stars with live music by Blivet. Black tie or creative theme costumes encouraged. Admission: $125. Proceeds benefit the Cape Fear Literacy Council. Audi Cape Fear, 255 Old Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-0911 or www.cfliteracy.org.

## NC Black Film Festival

## 3/26

### 3/7 Race for the Cure

8:30 a.m. Susan G. Komen Foundation's biggest fundraiser of the year. Survivor breakfast, Zumba warm-up, photos, survivor tribute, 5k, 1-mile and kids dash. Admission: $15–40. Proceeds benefit the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Second Street and Market Street, Wilmington. Info: www.komennctc.org/events/komen-wilmington-race-for-the-cure.

### 3/7 Hobby Greenhouse Tour

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Self-guided tour of local greenhouses throughout New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender counties. Free. NHC Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

### 3/7 Bluebird Workshop

9:15–10:30 a.m. Learn all about one of our area's most vibrant songbirds (the Eastern bluebird), their habitat, food preferences, and how to attract them to your yard. Free. Wild Bird & Garden, 3500 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

## Jazz Pianist Mary Louise Knutson

## 3/27

### 3/7 Backyard BBQ Cook-Off

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. More than thirty contestants, a double-blind judging, tastings, beer tent, raffles, food, arts and crafts vendors and live music by the Junkyard Mamas, Kenny Reeves & Trainwreck and the Mark Roberts Band. Proceeds benefit Step Up for Soldiers. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 431-8122 or www.stepupforsoldiers.org.

### 3/7 Pro Wrestling Expo & Tribute

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Expo); 8–10 p.m. (Tribute). Masters of Ring Entertainment presents the ultimate pro wrestling fan expo followed by *Lasting Legacy: A Tribute to Jim Cornette*. See website for special guests. Admission: $15–99. Coastline Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-4309 or www.mastersofringentertainment.com.

### 3/7 YCC Beach Dash

2 p.m. Beach dash features 1.4-mile course with obstacles (geared for all ages and fitness levels) and various blast stations throughout. Music, Zumba and snacks to follow. Admission: $18–25. Proceeds benefit the Wilmington Family YMCA. Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, 1000 Loggerhead Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 604-6456 or www.wilmingtonfamilyymca.org/events.

### 3/8 Bird & Kayak Excursion

8–11:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden and local guide company Mahanaim Adventures for a morning of kayaking and birding on our local waters. Kayak equipment included. Pre-registration required. Admission: $45. Wild Bird & Garden, 3500 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

## Mipso in Concert

## 3/28

### 3/8 Bridge Tournament

2–5 p.m. Sanctioned duplicate bridge game and party bridge, plus door prizes, raffle and food. Pre-registration required. Admission: $25. Proceeds benefit the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra. YWCA Bridge Center, Market Place Mall, 41 Government Center Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-9262 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

### 3/9 Prologue

7–8 p.m. Diane Chamberlain will join Ben Steelman of *Star News* to talk about her recent novel, *The Silent Sister*. Free. MC Erny Gallery at WHQR, Warwick Building, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or whqr.org.

### 3/9 & 10 Youth Nature Program

10–11 a.m. Children ages 2–5 can discover nature through stories, songs, hands-on activities, hikes and crafts. This week's theme: Silly Snakes. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

### 3/11 Bird Hike

8–9:30 a.m. Bird-watching hike along the NC

Birding Trail with environmental educators from Airlie Gardens and Jill Peleuses from Wild Bird & Garden. Admission: $3–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

### 3/11 Energy Clearing Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. Energy clearing meditation for letting go of the past led by Energy Healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $15 (suggested ). McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.allovehealing.com/meditation-workshop.html.

### 3/11 Public Education Program

7 p.m. *Organic Farming & Gardening 101 for the Coast*. Hear from local experts in the expanding organic farming scene in New Hanover County and learn about environmentally friendly gardening and ways that backyard gardens can help to protect our coastal waters, wildlife and habitats. Special guests include educator and organic farming advocate Matt Collogan and President of Progressive Gardens, Inc., Evan Folds. Fred & Alice Stanback Education Center, 309 West Salisbury Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-2838 or www.nccoast.org.

### 3/13 Black Cat Cruise

6–8 p.m. Two-hour cruise along the Cape Fear River with Deborah Barbein from Ghostwalk of Old Wilmington. Light appetizers included; cash bar available. Admission: $24.50. Wilmington Water Tours, 212 South Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 338-3134 or www.wilmingtonwatertours.net.

### 3/13 Music on Market

7:30 p.m. Concert features two contrasting and meaningful musical styles with the message of peace and eternal light. Includes the *Newtown Requiem* written in a slow jazz style for the loved ones of Sandy Hook Elementary School and the Fauré's *Requiem*. Free. St. Andrews-Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1416 Market Street. Info: (910) 762-9693 or www.musiconmarket.org.

### 3/13 Peter Yarrow Live

7:30 p.m. Peter Yarrow of the legendary Peter, Paul and Mary performs. As a successful artist and activist, his songwriting has produced some of the most moving songs the trio ever recorded, including "Puff the Magic Dragon," "Day is Done," "The Great Mandala" and "Light One Candle." Admission: $20–36. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### 3/14 Lo Tide Run

8 a.m. Annual 5k/10k race that takes a scenic route through the neighborhoods around Carolina Beach followed by an after-party at The Lazy Pirate with raffles and a silent auction. Admission: $25–40. Proceeds are donated to local families in financial crisis who are battling cancer. Carolina Beach Boardwalk, Cape Fear Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 470-2024 or lotiderun.org.

### 3/14 Fat Bike Beach Championship

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Inaugural 2.6-mile fat tire mountain bike race from thick sand to the hard-packed sand along the water's edge. Three levels of competition include beginner, sport or expert. All bikes are allowed to race; bikes over four inches are recommended. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2251 or triwilmington.eventuresports.com.

### 3/14 Family Science Saturday

10 a.m. (Preschool); 11 a.m. & 12 p.m. (ages 5 to 14). Celebrate Pi Day and Albert Einstein's birthday by measuring, estimating, identifying, reasoning, plotting and predicting through interactive mathematics activities. Admission: $5–8. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4362 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

### 3/14 St. Patrick's Day Festival

11 a.m. – 12 p.m. (Parade); 12–6 p.m. (Festival). St. Patrick's Day parade and celebration featuring entertainment by the Wilmington Police Pipes and Drums, The Blarney Broughs, The Molly Malones, Walsh Kelley School of Irish Dancing and the Slainte UNCW Irish Dance Club. Cultural items, food and beer available for purchase. Free. North Front Street & North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (216) 374-8884 or wilmingtonstpatricksdayfestival.com.

### 3/14 Battleship Program

12–5:30 p.m. Explore the USS *North Carolina*'s power plant. Includes classroom presentations and a behind-the-scenes tour of the ship's engineering spaces. N.C. naval steam engine expert Gene Oakley will be on site to demonstrate his working models of historic naval steam engines. Admission: $60–65. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

### 3/14 Metropolitan Opera

12:55 p.m. Metropolitan Opera production of Rossini's *La Donna del Lago* (The Lady of the Lake) featuring bel canto superstars Joyce DiDonato and Juan Diego Florez. Admission: $20–24. Lumina Theater, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu/lumina.

### 3/14 English High Tea

3 & 4:30 p.m. Enjoy an authentic Victorian-style high tea in the manner of *Downton Abbey*. Refreshments include teas, sandwiches, salmon on toast, short bread, cakes, scones and lemon curd. High tea attire encouraged, not required. Admission: $10 (suggested). Proceeds go toward the renovation of the Church of Good Shepherd's stained glass windows. Church of Good Shepherd, 515 Queen Street, Wilmington. For reservations and further information, contact Chris Warnecke at cwarnecke@ec.rr.com.

### 3/14 Live Music

7 p.m. Ted's Fun on the River presents Dawn Key Shotguns, an Americana duo with Carolina roots. Admission: $2. Ted's Fun on the River, 2 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 231-3379 or tedsfun.com.

### 3/14 Scholarship Pageant

7:30 p.m. High school juniors from New Hanover County schools compete during this annual scholarship pageant based on a private interview with judges, evening gown competition and on-stage presentation. The NC Azalea Festival Princess will be crowned at the end of the pageant. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/scholarship-pageant.

### 3/15 Adult History Bowl

History bowl for adults sponsored by the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society. Latimer House, 126 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-2014 or www.hslcf.org.

### 3/15 Winter Hootenanny

3–5 p.m. Benefit concert for the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0492 or www.hslcf.org.

### 3/18 Bird Hike

8:30–9:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden for a bird hike around Southport's beautiful historic district and waterfront. Free. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 East Brown Street, Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

### 3/18 Admissions Open House

10–11:30 a.m. Admissions open house at the Pine Grove campus. Free. Friends School of Wilmington, 207 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-8221 or www.fsow.org.

### 3/18 Snake & Turtle Feeding

4–4:30 p.m. A brief presentation about the live animals at the Halyburton Park Event Center followed by the feeding of a snake and turtle. Admission: $1. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

### 3/18 Energy Clearing Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. Energy clearing meditation for family harmony led by Energy Healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $15 (suggested). McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.allovehealing.com/meditation-workshop.html.

### 3/18 Live Theatre

7 p.m. *Jekyll & Hyde*, a pop-rock powerhouse musical exploring the life of a brilliant doctor whose experiments create a lethal counterpart. Admission: $5–30. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/presents.

### 3/19 NC Birding Trail Hike

8 a.m. – 4 p.m. A 2-mile hike along the North Carolina Birding Trail at Cabin Lake County Park. Admission: $10. Transportation included. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

### 3/19 Historical House Tour

6–7:30 p.m. Evening house tour with costumed guides every half hour. Admission: $10. Latimer House, 126 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0492 or www.hslcf.org.

### 3/19 Purse Auction & Raffle

6–8 p.m. Silent action and raffle with a varied selection of purses and accessories donated by local boutiques, retailers and designers. Proceeds benefit Wilmington Health Access for Teens. Country Club of Landfall, 800 Sunrunner Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 202-4605 or www.whatswhat.org.

### 3/19 Beatles Tribute Concert

7:30 p.m. *Yesterday & Today*, an interactive Beatles tribute concert; playlist determined by audience. Admission: $27–29. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road NW, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

### 3/19–22 Live Theater

7:30 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association presents the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning drama *Clybourne Park*. Based on the classic *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, the play features two stunning acts set fifty years apart. Admission: $15–30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut

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### 3/20 Fairy Garden Workshop

9–11 a.m. Artist Kathleen McLeod will lead a workshop in creating your own fairy garden. Bring the container; all other components will be provided. Pre-registration required. Admission: $35. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 East Brown Street, Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

### 3/20 Opening Art Reception

7–9 p.m. Opening reception for Diane Hause's *A Girl with Kaleidoscope Eyes* exhibit. Installation inspired by artist's cancer prognosis and how her perception of life has shifted in relation to it. On view through April 30. Free. 2Ten Haustudio, 15930 Highway 210 NC East, Ivanhoe. Info: (910) 874-3535 or www.haustudio.com.

### 3/20 & 21 Handmade Marketplace

3–9 p.m. (Friday); 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Saturday). Showcase of handmade creations by local craftsmen and artisans includes art, clothing, accessories and home and garden items. Food trucks and cash bar onsite. Admission: $5. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

### 3/20–22 Cape Fear Wildlife Expo

9 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Three-day event featuring dozens of exhibitors with interactive displays, workshops and educational activities showcasing the state's natural resources, wildlife, conservation and outdoor recreation. Admission: $7–20. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 795-0292 or www.capefearwildlifeexpo.com.

### 3/20–22 Spring Book Sale

5:30–9 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Spring book sale features books, CDs and DVDs for adults and children. Most items, donated by the community throughout the year, will be on sale for $1–3. Friday's sale is for Friends of the Library only. Admission: Free. Proceeds benefit the New Hanover County Public Library. NHC Northeast Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6322 or www.nhclibraryfriends.org.

### 3/21 Family Nature Program

9:30–10:30 a.m. *Coffee with the Birds*. Observe the Halyburton bird feeding area from indoors before taking a short walk to see the birds at the pond. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

### 3/21 Book Reading

1 p.m. Meet romance writers Kianna Alexander, Erica Monroe and Lyla Dune. Hear the authors read from their latest works, available for purchase and autographs. Free. NHC Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6323 or www.nhclibrary.org.

### 3/21 Farm Dinner & Benefit

6–10 p.m. "Raise the Barn" Farm Dinner and Benefit features a multi-course farm-to-table dinner and open bar in support of local farms and fisheries. Admission: $80. Proceeds benefit Feast Down East. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-7105 or www.poplargrove.org.

### 3/21 Red Cross Gala

6–11:30 p.m. Black tie fundraiser/celebration features live and silent auctions, gourmet dinner, live music, dancing and more. Admission: $150. Proceeds benefit the American Red Cross. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-2683 or www.redcross.org.

### 3/21 Low Country Banquet

7–11 p.m. Low country seafood and BBQ banquet hosted by the Cape Fear Wildlife Foundation. Includes open bar, raffles and live and silent auctions. Admission: $50. Proceeds benefit the Wild Child Program. Coastline Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 795-0292 or www.capefearwildlifeexpo.com.

### 3/21 Roast on the Coast

7–11 p.m. Annual oyster roast fundraiser hosted by the Junior League of Wilmington. Includes open bar, silent auction, broadcasts of the NCAA basketball games, live music and more. Admission: $65. Cape Fear Country Club, 1518 Country Club Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 799-7405 or www.jlwnc.org.

### 3/21 Symphony Orchestra Concert

8 p.m. The Wilmington Symphony Orchestra presents "Holst: The Planets." Features Gustav Holst's aural thriller and the winners of the Richard R. Deas Student Concerto Competition. Admission: $6–27. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

### 3/21 & 22 Coastal Living Show

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Annual exhibit presented by the Wilmington Woman's Club features more than 100 vendors plus demos of the latest trends in home, garden, office and seaside living. Free. Schwartz Center, CFCC, 601 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5031 or www.wilmingtonwomansclub.com.

### 3/21 & 22 Wrightsville Beach Marathon

11 a.m. – 9 p.m. (Saturday); 6:15 a.m. – 12:35 p.m. (Sunday). Marathon, half marathon, 5k, 1-mile run and relay challenge through the scenic Landfall community to Mayfaire Town Center. Also includes expo, pasta dinner with guest speakers Julie Moss and Kathleen McCartney, awards ceremony and free beer at the finish line. Admission: $20–110. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wrightsville-beachmarathon.com.

### 3/22 Sunday Studio Series

12–2 p.m. Artist Kathleen McLeod on painting wooden birdhouses, decorative masterpieces that will last for years outdoors. This month's theme: Nesting Bluebirds. Pre-registration required. Admission: $15. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 East Brown Street, Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wild-birdgardeninc.com.

### 3/22 Children's Tea

2–4 p.m. This year's theme, *Frozen*, features photo ops with Azalea Belles and Princesses, a "low tea" menu, elegant attire and lots of fun. Admission: $53.50–63.50. Proceeds benefit the Cape Fear Volunteer Center. Cape Fear Country Club, 1518 Country Club Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 392-8180 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/azalea-childrens-tea.

### 3/22 Workshop

2–4 p.m. *Identifying and Dating Your Family Photos*. Maureen Taylor on techniques genealogists and local historians use to help identify unknown persons in old family photographs. Free. NHC Northeast Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6305 or www.nhclibrary.org.

### 3/22 Civil War Cruise

2–5 p.m. *Closing Down the Kingdom: Fort Fisher and the Fall of Wilmington 1865*, a three-hour narrated cruise along the Cape Fear River with Dr. Chris Fonvielle. Admission: $50. Wilmington Water Tours, 212 South Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 338-3134 or www.wilmingtonwatertours.net.

### 3/22 Symphony Youth Orchestra Concert

4 p.m. Wilmington Symphony Youth Orchestra conducted by Steven Errante and the Wilmington Junior Strings conducted by Jane Tierney. Admission: $6. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

### 3/22 Music at First

5 p.m. Music at First presents the East Carolina Chamber Singers conducted by Andrew Crane. Free. First Presbyterian Church, 125 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6688 or www.firstonthird.org.

### 3/23 & 24 Youth Nature Program

10–11 a.m. Children ages 2–5 can discover nature through stories, songs, hand-on activities, hikes and crafts. This week's theme: Animal Names. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

### 3/24 & 25 Youth Math & Science Program

3:30 p.m. (Tuesday); 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m. (Wednesday). Preschool Math and Science: Spatial Awareness. children ages 3 to 6 learn through interactive story time, hands-on experiments and exploration stations. Free. Tuesday: Myrtle Grove Public Library, 5155 South College Road, Wilmington; Wednesday: Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington & Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6365 or www.nhclibrary.org.

### 3/24 Smart Start Breakfast

7:45 a.m. Pledge breakfast for Children's Champions, which recognizes members of the community who provide exceptional service to young children and their families during the early stages of life. Includes breakfast with guest speaker Rhonda Bellamy. Proceeds benefit Smart Start of New Hanover County. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 815-3731 or www.newhanoverkids.org.

### 3/25 Business Conference & Expo

11:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. Region's largest annual business community gathering features more than 100 exhibitors from a range of different industries, free seminars, keynote lunch and an after-hours networking event. Admission: $5. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-8600 or www.wilmingtonbiz.com.

### 3/25 Energy Clearing Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. Energy clearing meditation for healing overwhelm led by Energy Healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $15 (suggested). McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.allllovehealing.com/meditation-workshop.html.

### 3/25 Celtic Fiddle Concert

7:30 p.m. Donnell Leahy and Natalie MacMaster: Visions of Cape Breton. Renowned Canadian husband-and-wife fiddle masters deliver a night of extraordinary Celtic music and dance. Admission: $18–36. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### 3/26 Bluebird Workshop

9:30–10:30 a.m. Learn all about one of our area's most vibrant songbirds (the Eastern Bluebird), including how to attract them to your yard. Free. Dry Street Pub & Pizza, 101 East Brown Street, Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

### 3/26 Book Talk

11 a.m. Author Chris Fonvielle, Jr. discusses his new book, *To Forge a Thunderbolt: Fort Anderson and the Battle for Wilmington*. Optional lunch to follow in the Tea room. Admission: $5/talk; $15/talk & lunch. Latimer House, 126 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0492 or www.lcfhs.org.

### 3/26–29 NC Black Film Festival

Four-day juried festival presented by the Black Arts Alliance showcases independently made features, shorts, animation and documentary films by African-American filmmakers. A prize of $500 will be awarded in each category. Various locations in Wilmington. Info: (910) 620-3313 or www.blackartsalliance.org.

### 3/27 Southport Chirp

9–10 a.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden for an informal gathering of birding enthusiasts and bring your questions, interesting bird sightings, and stories to share with local bird lovers. Free. Wild Bird & Garden, 105 East Brown Street, Southport. Info: (910) 457-9453 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

### 3/27 Gallery Walk

6–9 p.m. Self-guided tour of galleries, art spaces and studios in Downtown Wilmington. Free. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

### 3/27 Piano Concert

7:30 p.m. The Wilmington Concert Association presents jazz pianist Mary Louise Knutson. Admission: $10–30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.wilmingtonconcert.com.

### 3/27 & 28 Car Show

3–8 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Saturday). Classic car show hosted by Sun Coast Cruisers includes night cruise, free social, car parade, door prizes, raffle, awards, live music, and various craft, commercial and food vendors. Fort Fisher Air Force Recreation Area, 118 Riverfront Road, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 409-0231 or www.backtothebeachcarshow.com.

### 3/27 & 28 Dance Festival

7–9 p.m. Inaugural dance festival hosted by the Dance Cooperative. Artists from the greater Wilmington area perform modern, jazz, musical theater and contemporary. City Stage, 21 North Front Street, Suite 501, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4995 or thedancecooperative.org.

### 3/27–29 Spring Book Sale

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Spring book sale includes books, CDs and DVDs for adults and children. Most items, donated by the community throughout the year, will be on sale for 10¢ – $2. Admission: Free. Proceeds benefit the New Hanover County Public Library. NHC Northeast Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6322 or www.nhclibraryfriends.org.

### 3/27–29 One Tree Hill Convention

12 p.m. – midnight. (Friday); 9:30–1:30 a.m. (Saturday); 9:30 a.m. – 9 p.m. (Sunday). Reunion for fans of the hit television show filmed in the Port City for eight years. Includes parties, appearances by actors and actresses, Q&A panels, autograph signings, meet and greets, photo ops and more. Admission: $35–795. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (352) 874-8500 or www.eyeconfla.com.

### 3/27–29 Comedy Dinner Theatre

7 p.m. *Still Bitchin': Rude Bitches Make Me Tired 2*. Celia Rivenbark's latest novel gets a second dinner theater makeover, this time with additional stories not found in the book. Advice from these southern gals will keep you in stitches. Admission: $22–38. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

### 3/28 Medal of Honor Day

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Celebrate the seventy men who were awarded our Nation's highest military honor for their actions during the campaign to capture Fort Fisher. Free. Fort Fisher State Historic Site, 1610 Fort Fisher Boulevard South, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-5538 or www.nchistoricsites.org/fisher.

### 3/28 Youth Nature Program

1:30–3 p.m. Shelling the Shores. Children ages 6–11 discover how sea creatures behave, live and deal with a changing environment. Children will pick out shells and get up close and personal with live critters. Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

### 3/28 Walk & Dog Dash

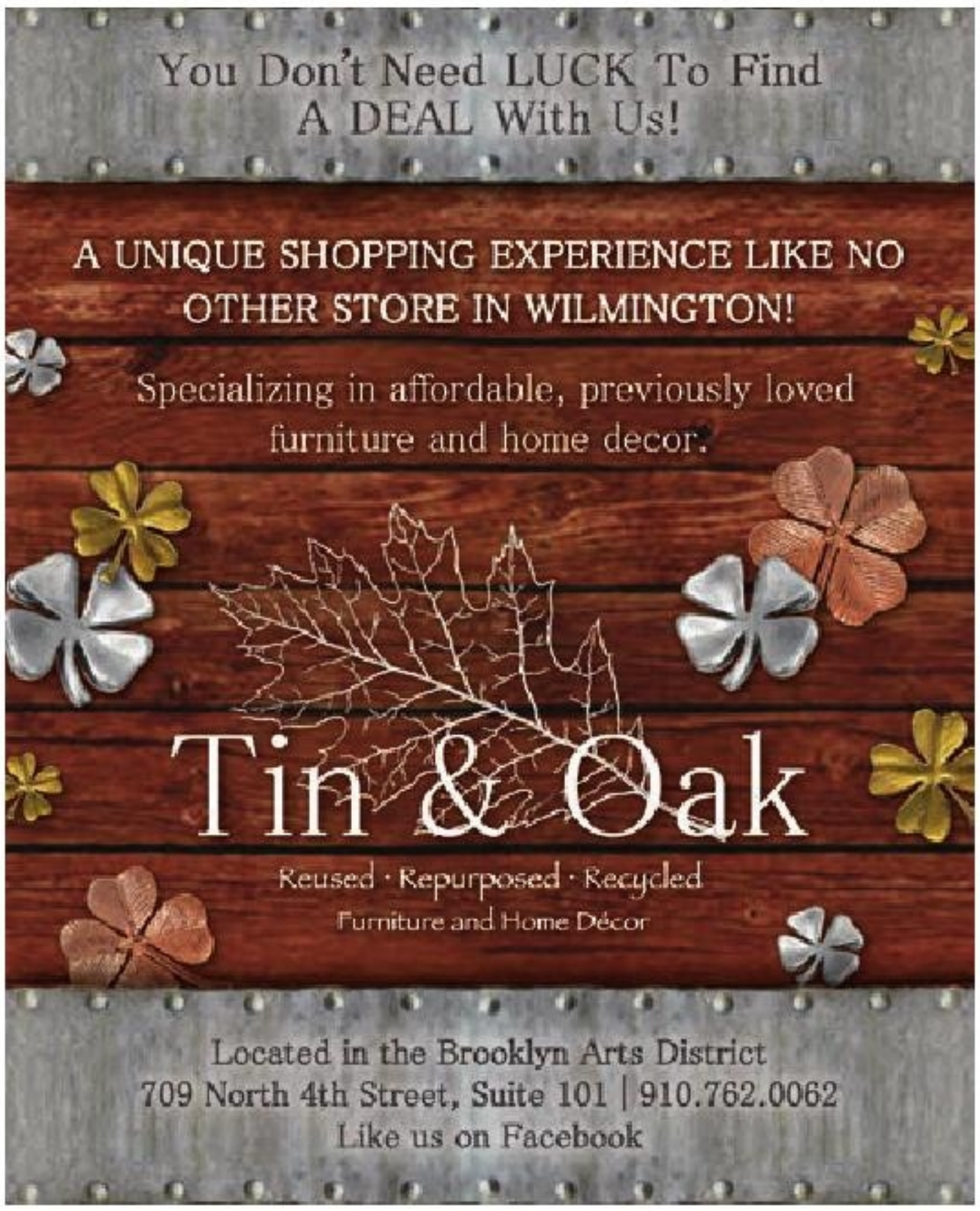
2–6 p.m. Pet-friendly fundraiser includes doggie photo booth, food, vendors, raffles, canine massage, training demos, pet costume contest and a 1.5-mile dash/walk around scenic Hugh MacRae Park. Admission: $25. Proceeds benefit Canines for Service. Hugh MacRae Park, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Shelters No.5 and 6, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-8181 or www.caninesforservice.org.

### 3/28 Blue Ribbon Run

4–6 p.m. 5k/1-mile run held to honor Wilmington moms Julie Brown and Christina Gianoplis. Reception to follow at Dockside Restaurant. Admission: $15–30. Proceeds benefit Susie's Cause and the fight against colorectal cancer. Autumn Hall, 1202 Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: its-go-time.com/blue-ribbon-run.

### 3/28 Rotary Club Anniversary

5:45–10 p.m. The Wilmington Rotary Club celebrates a century of service with dinner, danc-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Cameron Art Museum
Cape Fear Academy
Cape Fear Museum
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Compass Pointe
Cousins Deli
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Fabric Solutions
Ferguson Bath Kitchen and Lighting
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First South Bank
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Pomegranate Books
Port City Java Cafes
Residence Inn Wilmington Landfall
Salt Works
Shell Island
Station One
Sweet and Savory
Thalian Hall Center for Performing Arts
The Children's Museum
The Ivy Cottage
The Shop at Seagate
Two Sisters Bookery
Thrill of the Hunt
Village Market
Wilmington Visitor's Buraeu
Wine and Design
Wrightsville Beach Museum

ing, live music by the Duke Ladd Orchestra and guest speaker Dr. Peter Salk. Admission: $100. Proceeds benefit the Wilmington Rotary Club. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonrotary100.com.

### 3/28 Mipso in Concert

7:30 p.m. The renegade traditionalists of Mipso are doing their part to take three-part harmony and Appalachian influences into new territory. Admission: $18–32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### 3/28 Theatrical Performance

8 p.m. *The Clothesline Muse*. A unique theatrical experience exploring the role of the clothesline in African-American culture with inspired music by Nnenna Freelon, expressive dance by choreographer Kariamu Welsh and vibrant art by Maya Freelon Asante. Admission: $20. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts/clotheslinemuse.html.

### 3/28 & 29 Herb & Garden Fair

9 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Includes local produce, plants, herbal products, arts and crafts, raffle, food vendors and a variety of classes and activities led by local experts. Admission: $5/adult; $3/senior. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org.

### 3/29 Paws4People Race

9 a.m. Pet-friendly 10k, 5k and 1-mile run along the roads and trails of UNCW's campus and the Cross City Trail. Raffle held during race features items donated by local merchants. Admission: $35–45/10k; $25–35/5k; $20/1-mile. Proceeds benefit Paws4People animal assistance programs. UNCW Fort Fisher Center, 615 Hamilton Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.p4pwilmington5k.com.

### 3/29 Black River Cruise

1–5 p.m. Enjoy a three-hour cruise along the Black River, 50 miles of cypress trees, Spanish moss and pickerel weed. Observe rare fish and mussel species — perhaps the occasional river otter too. Admission: $50. Wilmington Water Tours, 212 South Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 338-3134 or www.wilmingtonwatertours.net.

## WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

### Monday – Wednesday Cinematique Films

7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

### Tuesday Wine Tasting

6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

### Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

### Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM

12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

### Thursday Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

### Thursday Writing for Healing

6:15–9 p.m. Writing for Healing workshop on "Awakening Abundance" led by Energy Healer Jennifer Chapis. Admission: $350/four-week journey. Limited seating; pre-registration required. Info: www.allovehealing.com/writing-for-healing.html.

### Thursday – Sunday Live Theater

8 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Laughter on the 23rd Floor, a play inspired by Neil Simon's experience as a writer for Sid Caeser's Your Show of Shows as he and the staff attempt to outdo each other with gags while competing for the attention of the show's star. Admission: $15–20. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 367-5237 or www.bigdawgproductions.org.

### Friday & Saturday Irish Theater

7 p.m. Top of the Mornin' to Ya. Faith and Beggorah are Irish morning talk show hosts on location in Wilmington (think Kathie Lee and Hoda on Irish whiskey). Show segments include interviews with "celebrities", live music and much fuss over "filmington". Served with an Irish-inspired meal. Admission: $18–28. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

### Saturday Port City Playwrights

11 a.m. A guild of local playwrights and screenwriters that support writers in all levels of development, giving them an opportunity to present their work for feedback, share production opportunities and host guest speakers. This month's reading is Ages and Stages, followed by discussions with the audience. McAlister's Deli, 740 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: portcityplaywright.wix.com/pcpp.

### Saturday Super Saturday Fun Time

3 p.m. Live theater and variety show. Tickets: $8. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

### Sunday Energy Clearing Meditation

10–11 a.m. Energy clearing meditation led by Energy Healer Jennifer Chapis. 3/1: Manifesting Your Desires; 3/8: Timelessness; 3/15: Feeling Cuddly; 3/22: Courage; 3/29: Oneness. Admission: $15 (suggested). Exhale Yoga & Wellness Studio, 16 South Front Street, Wilmington (enter in alley). Info: www.allovehealing.com/writing-for-healing.html.

*To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.*

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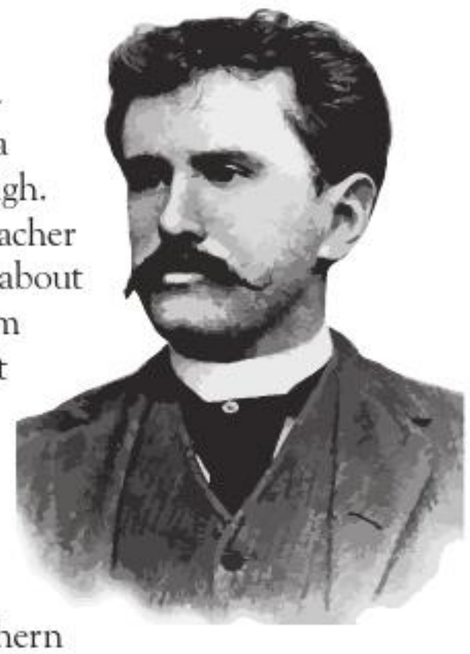
# N.C. WRITER'S Notebook

By Sandra Redding

## Upcoming Events

*The number one secret of being a successful writer is this: Marry an English major.* — Stephen E. Ambrose

**March 8** (Sunday, 3–5 p.m.). Sable Books' International Women's Day Reading. Scuppernong Books, Greensboro. Celebrate women and, yes, aging with music, discussions and readings by Barbara Kenyon, Hillsborough Poet Laureate; Trudi Young Taylor, author of *Breasts Don't Lie*; Debra Kaufman, author of *The Next Moment*; and Sheryl Rider, plus other Greensboro contributors to *Letters for My Little Sister.* Info: scuppernongbooks.com



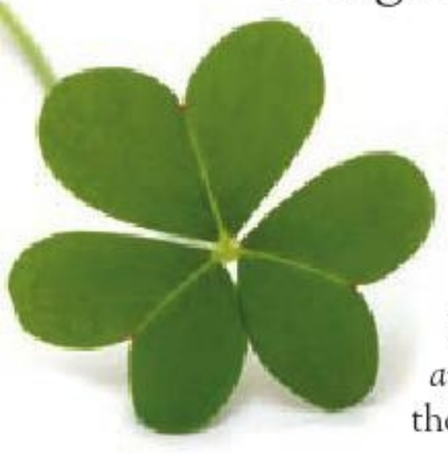
**March 14** (Saturday, 7 p.m.). Reading/discussion by Joseph Bathanti and Gilda Morina Syverson. Quail Ridge Books & Music, Raleigh. Former N. C. Poet Laureate joins an artist, teacher and memoirist to instruct — and reminisce — about the writing process. Info: quailridgebooks.com

**March 19** (Thursday, 3–4 p.m.). Humorist and storytelling scholar extraordinaire Elliot Engel channels William Sydney Porter as part of The Explorations for Adults Series with a talk on *O.Henry: His Surprise Endings . . . and Beginnings*, Southern Pines Public Library, 170 West Connecticut Avenue, Southern Pines. Free, but tickets required. Info: (910) 692-8235 or sppl.net

**March 19–22** (Thursday through Sunday) *Table Rock Spring Studio 2015: Writing Retreat on N.C.'s Inner Banks.* Time to write, explore nature and enjoy the area around the Scuppernong River in Columbia, where writers will share their work in sessions led by Georgeann Eubanks. Some scholarships available. Info: minnowmedia.net

**April 18** (Saturday, all day). North Carolina Writers' Network Spring Conference 2015, UNCG. Intensive fiction, nonfiction and poetry workshops, faculty readings, open mic sessions and so much more. Info: ncwn.com

## Congratulations



*O, the shamrock, the green, immortal shamrock! Chosen leaf for bard and chief, Old Erin's native shamrock.*
— Thomas Moore

Honoring St. Patrick's Day, Wake Forest University Press has released *The Shack: Irish Poets in the Foothills and the Mountains* (wfupress.wfu.edu.) . . . *Big Cactus*, the latest novel by prolific novelist Sylvia Wilkinson, of

Durham, combines desert scenery with Southern humor. Free excerpt at owlcanyonpress.com . . . In *Front Row, Section D*, Greensboro writer John Hitchcock shares the thrills and chills of viewing Greensboro wrestling matches from the 1960s–1980s . . . Amazon's Best Books includes *Travels in Vermeer: A Memoir* by Michael White, director of the Creative Writing Program at UNC Wilmington. . . . *Hotel Worthy*, Val Nieman's just-released book of poetry, received high praise from distinguished poet, Sarah Lindsay "At last, a book that states clearly the purpose of life." Press53.com

*Prime Number* Magazine announces 2015 contest prizes for top three entries in Poetry, Short Fiction and Creative Nonfiction. Deadline: March 31, 2015. Guidelines: primenumbermagazine.com

## Writing Lesson

*The voices that guide my writing life are older than I am – the umbilical cord forever unwinding and yet tethered to and dependent on a place called home.*
— Jill McCorkle

Never mind the flap. To everybody's relief, Gov. Pat McCrory named Shelby Stephenson of Benson North Carolina's eighth Poet Laureate, commending his plans to "work with helping nursing home residents express themselves through poetry."

"This is great news for North Carolina," Ed Southern, executive director of the North Carolina Writers' Network, wrote. "Our state and its writers could wish for no better ambassador." Kathryn Stripling Byer, former State Poet Laureate, describes Stephenson as "A singer, an old-time raconteur, a poet attuned to the rhythms of our state and its people. And for those who keep saying they don't like poetry, just wait till you hear Shelby. You will change your mind in a flash."

A professor of English and editor of *Pembroke* magazine until 2010, Stephenson's writing includes poems about possums, mules, tractors and a slave girl. "My early teachers were the thirty-five foxhounds my father hunted," he explains. "The trees and streams, fields, the world of my childhood — all that folklore — those are my subjects." An accomplished musician, former radio announcer and a farmer, his magnanimous grin, generous spirit and laid-back attitude help students and fellow poets find their authentic voices by advising them to do as he does: *Write about what you know.*

---

Avoid getting pinched; wear green on St. Patrick's Day! Keep me updated on writer happenings. sanredd@earthlink.net.

*Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's novel,* Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *is a riveting story about heartbreak and hope in a Quaker community.*

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# Port City People

## Wilmington Wine and Chocolate Festival

Friday, January 30, 2015

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Tyeler Cyr and Jeff Ramey

Ashley Farnell, Katie Lovering, Aly McConnell, Molly LeBlanc

Henna Patrick and Ethan Bilderberck

Kelsey Moody and Claudia Eckert

Melannie Pate, Kelli Kiger, Cathryn Calvell, Ashley Alford

Ashley Counts and Chris Lykins

Rhia and David Brown

Laura Hagy, Alex Harman, Kate Wilson

David Ham and Megan Feeley

Tara Capps, Lori Phillips, Brenda Doub

Katie Cendron, Monique Martin, Chloe Watkins

# Port City People

## The 15th Annual Founders' Gala

Air Wilmington Hanger

Saturday, January 31, 2015

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Tracy Dean and Gina Andrews

Bobby McNeill and Deidra Blanks, MD

Charles and Dr. Heather Davis

Scott and Debbie Hansberry

Carter and Ryan Benton

Nanci and John Boldizar

Sharon Lacey, Andrew and Stephanie Lanier, Sabrina Davis

Angie Chepelsky, Jennifer Merklin, Chasity Chace, Marianne Kilos

David and Michele Hunt, Rick and Linda DeCrescente

Allison and Michael McWhorter

Marion and Don Lucas

Matt and Jean Nichols

# Port City People

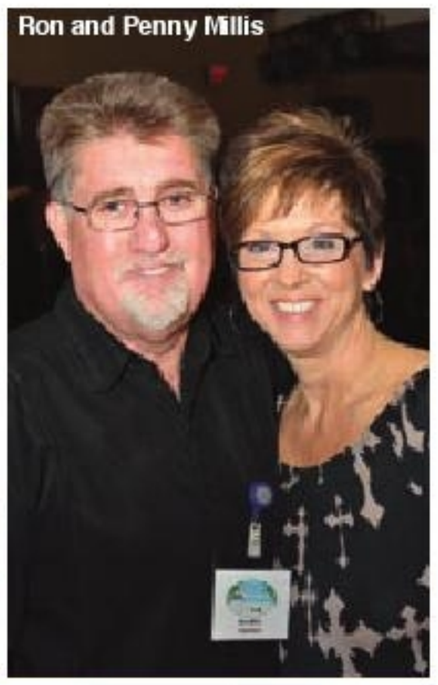
## East Coast Shag Classic
## Benefiting Women of Hope
Thursday, January 29, 2015
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Charlene and Jerry May, Valerie Swiger and Bob Lutz

Jim and Joy Hanson

Kenny and Elizabeth Barnes

Sandy and Ken Jones


Ron and Penny Millis

Barbara and Ron Hastings

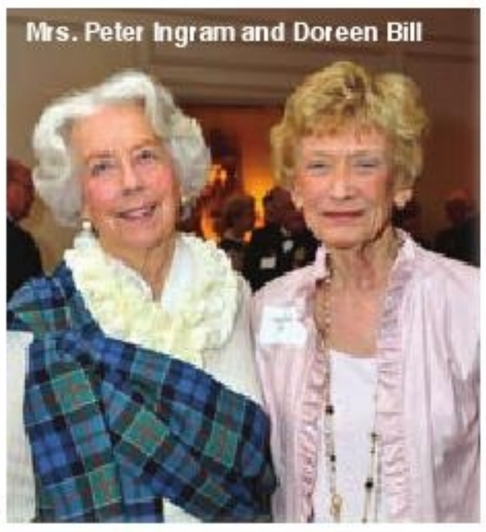
Pat and Steve Manor

# Port City People

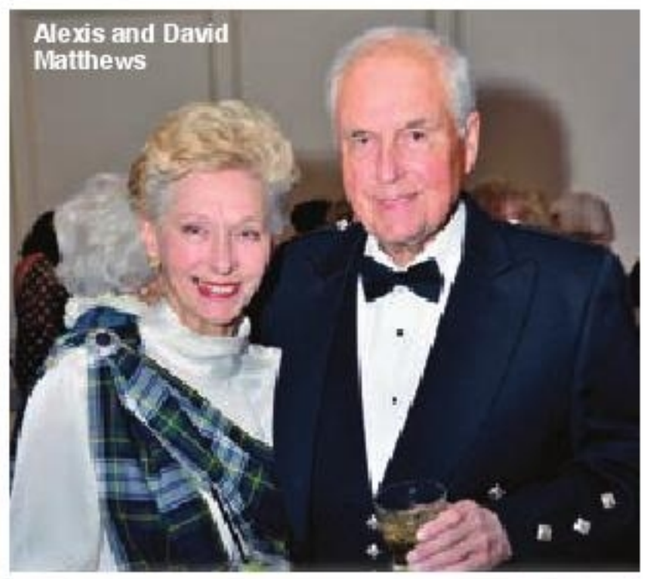
## Robert Burns Supper & Celebration
The Country Club of Landfall
Saturday, January 31, 2015
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Sharon Rankin, Pam McKenzie, Dianne Snyder

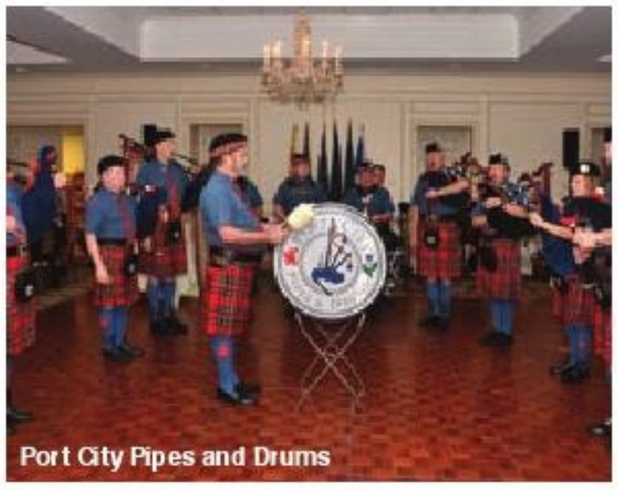
Diane McCord, Lan Nichols, Ron McCord


Mrs. Peter Ingram and Doreen Bill

Vivian Parlier-Burnett and Julian Burnett


Alexis and David Matthews

Alex Rankin, J.C. McKenzie, Dick Snyder


Port City Pipes and Drums

Kirk and Diane Warner

Cameron and Barbara Seely

# Go Green, Tar Children

## *March's stars*

By Astrid Stellanova

Here we are at the whoopee start of spring, but also entering the favored month for war-mongering Romans. A conundrum. No wonder you might feel discombobulated. Sure spring is fun, but the Ides of March spelled doom for Julius Caesar. This month marks celebrations like St. Patrick's Day – and due south, good ole Savannah is second only to N.Y.C. for rocking that green-beer, Irish spring, shamrock-waving day. Celebrate that first green leaf on the tree, Tar Children, Irish, Roman, Patagonian, or whatever and wherever you may be.

**Pisces (February 19–March 20)**
You ain't immortal, but you may find yourself feeling like it. This is the month for you to enjoy and celebrate your good health and good genes, lucky favors your sign enjoys. Like most of us, you know it's easier to grow older than to grow wiser. But you are now walking in high cotton as you move through your birth month. Enjoy the slow thaw after a hard winter and a feeling of personal deliverance from something you've been carrying. Let it go – little fish, you may be stuck in the ice but you ain't frozen no more. Like the rest of us, you wish you could stop hearing that song in your head. ("Let it go, let it go!") This is a year when you give the world something it needs – a little light and kindness. No big burdens to carry anymore – just good cheer and celebration.

**Aries (March 21–April 19)**
It's impossible to repress that Aries cocksure feeling that Lady Luck is always going to load the dice in your favor. Odds like the house, Sugar, and you know it. But let's face it – you'd rather be playing the tables even when you're losing than lying around thinking about world problems. The thing is, you can change a lot of what ails the world if you harness those gifts you haven't used so much lately.

**Taurus (April 20–May 20)**
Grandpa tells me he wanted to be just senile enough to forget his tax problems. And his doctor's advice to eat broccoli and exercise more. There's something you need to forget, Child, and there should be enough going on to help you get to a happier state of oblivion. Somebody long forgotten, a body you never expected to see again, shows up in your life again. And you won't believe why. Be happy – it's a second chance for a do-over that needs doing all over again.

**Gemini (May 21–June 20)**
You're a little like my favorite customer at the beauty shop who said she started out with nothing and has managed to hold on to most of it. Humor and a genius for money will get you where you want to go this month. That humor will also get you an offer for friendship and bonding that will make you rich in new ways. Take care of something for your family that is a small effort, but that only you can do, and you will reap the reward.

**Cancer (June 21–July 22)**
The new season ahead is a breather. You've been under the gun and now you get a break. There's a little reward you've been thinking about, and you deserve it. Get your head together, even if you feel like your body ain't, and splurge on a massage, pedicure, new hairdo – or all three. That's what Astrid does – if my hair ain't right, nothing else is.

**Leo (July 23–August 22)**
Honey, I don't remember being so absent-minded. But absent-mindedness is one trait you might want to develop – you remember things you would be better off forgetting. Forgetting and forgiving are not your strong suits, but this is 2015 and you can grow, Leo. On the outside, all looks fine with you, including your hair color. Now get that inner turmoil tamped down and let your outside match your inside.

**Virgo (August 23–September 22)**
It is true you admire the early bird for getting the worm. But the second rat nabs the cheese. That is my boyfriend Beau's claim to fame – he is almost always the crafty one who gets the prize. You have the ability for being the stealthiest one and that is exactly what most people don't know about – obviously, which is why it is such a talent. It will come in handy this month, Sugar, and you will get to the cheese first.

**Libra (September 23–October 22)**
Your dogma could run over your karma if you don't consider that your point of view ain't the only one in town. Seriously, Star Child, you get a little full of your fine self and so listen up to Astrid. Librans make for the best friend in the world – loyal, kind, generous, but they always think they know what is best and do get bossy. You are not the boss of the Universe. Check that impulse, and allow the world to love you for some of your finer traits.

**Scorpio (October 23–November 21)**
A universal S.O.S. to all Scorpios could be needed right about now, given what Astrid sees in the stars. And here is the message: Give of yourselves and your multitude of talents in the most generous way you know how. The universe has been extremely good to you. Repay the favor. You may not know it yet, but it will pay you returns you never even imagined.

**Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)**
You're sitting at the checker board alone while everybody else is off playing Truth or Dare, right? Aw, Honey, don't feel bad, because the stars have a lot of fun in store for you this month. And, by the way, prepare for more than one adventure that will cause you to need a change of wardrobe. Orange ain't the new black, Honey, and that ain't what I mean, either.

**Capricorn (December 22–January 19)**
Sometimes it's easier to meet a true love or find a good time than for you to meet expenses, and your sense of extravagance may have finally gotten you into a trap. My recommendation is to keep enjoying your sense of discovery – good for you, Honey – but the stars say you will have to save just a teensy bit more if you want to go for that one big bucket list item. Bucket lists require a few bucks as a general rule. But a sense of adventure don't have to always be expensive – for some Star Children, it can begin with a walk across the street for coffee with a new friend.

**Aquarius (January 20–February 18)**
Your dreamed-of comeback (whether it's a job, a lost love, or an old skill) may very well require you actually go somewhere and risk something. Like Grandpa says, you ain't making a comeback when you ain't been anywhere. This is an excellent year for your dreams coming true. Get off the sofa; you may be just one bag of chips away from the lunch/date/interview of your life.

*For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.*

# Home Fires Burning

*A good fire warms body and soul, and connects you to the mystery of your being*

By Clyde Edgerton

**When I was 14,** I dropped a lighted stick match into a puddle of paint remover just to see what would happen. The puddle was beneath a worktable — upon which rested a desk — in the yard of a furniture repair shop. The shop was about a block from my boyhood home. Morris Forehand, a friend and shop worker, was splashing paint remover on the desk. He was probably 18. I had been standing there looking at that puddle; I had a box of stick matches in my pocket, and I wondered what the puddle would do — lit. I dropped the match and *ka-whoom*. The table, desk and the tree branches above the desk were engulfed in flames. Morris ran inside the shop, back out with a fire extinguisher. I crept backward quietly. Morris swept the fire extinguisher left and right down at ground level, and put out the fire. The table and desk were scorched. I remember the color black on brown wood.

The shop owner, a small red-headed man, Emerson Page, rushed out of the shop and walked in a big circle around the scorched wood as I quietly started toward home. He caught me at the side of his building. My back was against the wall, and he was — guess what? — agitated. He kept calling me by my cousin Gary's name —"Gary, how could you do such a thing? . . . What got into you, Gary?"

I kept saying, "I don't know, sir. I don't know." I silently pleaded, *Please, please, please, keep calling me Gary. And tell Gary's daddy – not mine.*

This morning, more than half a century after the fire at Emerson Page's shop, I get up before light, put on warm clothes, unlock the side door, let out the dog, walk outside to the woodpile. In the winter I build a fire almost every morning. It has as much to do with family and deep memories as with keeping warm. (I think the deep, unreachable memories go back thousands — maybe hundreds of thousands — of years.)

In a fire is dance, constant movement, and changing colors. Surely no hour has passed since our species gained control of fire several hundred thousand years ago without someone, somewhere, getting pleasure from staring into a built fire. My earliest memory of a fireplace fire is from the second house I lived in as a child. I would lie on the couch in front of the fireplace and watch the fire. Our fourth house had a big fireplace and in winters we usually kept a fire going.

Watching a fire, I become bound to my forbearers — especially those I've heard stories about. Aunt Ivaleen told me — over twenty years after my father's death — about his method of preparation of the morning fire in the kitchen fireplace at their farm home — this from a time and place when an open fire was essential for warmth and cooking. No electricity. Fires were made simply and effectively, with sufficient kindling and with good burning wood — not wood that burned up too quickly or wouldn't catch well because of dampness. Although my father's brothers would wait until early morning to visit the wood pile, gather wood, come back in and start a fire, my father would get everything ready in the kitchen the night before. He wouldn't have to go outside, sleepy, in the cold mornings, though it would be plenty cold inside the house — Aunt Ivaleen told me there were cracks between boards in the kitchen floor, through which crumbs were swept for chickens under the house.

My Uncle Bob remembers his Uncle Alfred getting a pot of coffee that hung in the fireplace and drinking from the spout while the coffee was still percolating.

I remember roasting fresh corn, still in the shucks, in the coals of campfires.

Once in a while we have "Old Fashioned Night" in our house (not Old Fashioned as in the cocktail). All electrical lights and appliances are cut off. Only a fireplace fire and candles are allowed, and sometimes we cook on the fire in the fireplace.

In Eudora Welty's short story "Death of a Traveling Salesman," a man has to go to a neighboring farm to "borrow fire." Many relatives — mine and yours — back in the old days before the ready availability of matches, traveled to a neighboring farm or house to borrow fire. In those days you "banked" the fireplace coals and ashes well at bedtime — that is, you covered the coals with ashes so that they would last — and then in the morning a hot coal could enable the starting of a fresh fire, and you wouldn't have to borrow fire.

We don't need fireplaces anymore — except to entertain us (without commercials) as we sit and stare into a little glowing universe, except to warm our butts as no furnace can, except to remind us of a place at home to sit close to each other and . . . talk.

And because you never know what a fire might do, a little mystery comes into play, like with so many other good things.

*Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir and a new work,* Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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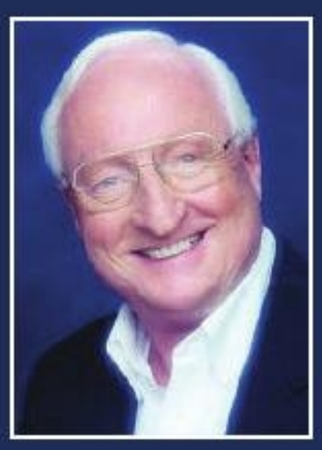

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